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Marxism Today

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

J. BROADBENT — THE ROLE OF RAILWAYS IN BRITISH TRANSPORT TODAY

JACK WODDIS — THE SOVIET UNION AND THE CONGO

LIONEL MUNBY — STUDYING/WRITING WORKING CLASS HISTORY

VICTOR KIERNAN — SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

DISCUSSION:

MARGOT HEINEMANN, JULIAN TUDOR HART — ART AND SUPERSTRUCTURE

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Marxism Today

Vol. 8 No. 10

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Editorial Comments

THIS issue of *Marxism Today* appears at the period of a General Election in which the two main parties appear closer to each other in political principles than ever before, and in which all sincere genuine political controversy is muted as far as these two bodies are concerned.

There is no challenge on the part of the Labour Party to the system of state monopoly capitalism as such. The controversy is around which political party is best fitted to exercise a general supervision over the system, intervening when and where it is necessary. Controversy conducted on this plane tends to benefit the Tories if the election is being conducted in the midst of boom—albeit a short artificial and exceedingly wobbly one. For the Tories represent the capitalist owners and managers of the system, and can therefore argue that if things appear to be doing not so badly there is no need to vote for any change.

Tory Eyewash

This type of argument which excludes any analysis of the actual situation of the British capitalist economy in the world, was exemplified in the famous and much discussed Tory broadcast in mid-September. In this broadcast Charles Curran, M.P. for Uxbridge, presided over two old age pensioners explaining that they were voting Conservative because the old age pensioner today was faring much better than in the past. Whether these elderly people had ever voted otherwise than Conservative seemed doubtful. (At the 1959 General Election most investigators believed that a substantial majority of old age pensioners had voted Labour.)

Note however the total absence of facts. British old age pensions, for example, as a proportion of earnings when at work, compare very unfavourably with those in most major capitalist countries on the Continent. So there were no international comparisons. The gap between average earnings inside Britain and the state old age pension is now greater than ever before. Relative to employed workers' standards, the position of the old age pensioner is therefore steadily worsening. No comparisons there either.

Then there was the lady in the family which was just getting a new car. This was a sign that things were going well under the Tories, so she saw no reason why she should continue to vote Labour like her husband.

If her husband was a better paid worker (which seemed to be the implication of the story) then the new car must have been got on the basis of his earnings which could only have been pushed up, because union and shop stewards ignored the repeated Tory attempts to enforce a wage pause. So the lady might find her husband more trustworthy than the Tories after all. The main Tory election propaganda plan is clear. Don't discuss political details. Sell the Tory party by the same techniques, as are used to prove that all advertised detergents wash whiter than each other.

Steely Silence

There is one group of anti-socialist supporters who seemed to have a case, namely the great steel firms of the country. Surely no body of industrialists could go on boasting, day after day, about the marvellous efficiency of their industry, under private enterprise, if this were untrue?

Yet the fact remains that in this boom, long before the steel industry had reached full capacity, massive imports of foreign steel, mainly from the continent of Europe, were flooding the British market. Engineering firms who bought the steel were giving two reasons—(1) the steel was cheaper and (2) it was of more consistent quality. Yet this steel, selling cheaper than British had to surmount a quite high tariff. This surely demonstrates the ghastly failure of the British steel industry on its own home ground. We doubt if this fact will ever be explained in a steel company advertisement.

Nationalisation

We notice that a number of Labour supporters in public opinion polls have been expressing their dislike of nationalisation. We wonder why?

Because despite their gross mismanagement by the Tories some nationalised industries are making a fair show. We doubt if in capitalist Europe there could be found more efficient electricity supply and coal industries or a better airline than British European Airways—all paying, all unsubsidised. All doing fairly well in spite of the first two being used as milch cows by the great private monopolies and in spite of Tory indifference to the nationalised industries in general. In fact the only nationalised

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industry which is not paying is the railways. But where in the world, public or privately owned, are railways paying?

Still the railways are being subsidised to the extent of about £90 million per annum. Terrible? But what about the subsidies for private industry? The subsidies to private agriculture, to the cotton industry, to shipbuilding, and to induce firms to settle in the development areas.

In 1962-63 these grants and subsidies were as follows—agriculture and fisheries £352 million, aircraft research and development £168 million, space research £6 million, textiles £3.5 million, distribution of industry grants and other assistance £16 million. In addition from 1959-60 to 1962-63 there is a loan of £45 million to the steel firm of Colvilles Ltd.

So the subsidies to keep important sectors of private capitalism afloat far exceed those to nationalised industry.

However, the Labour Party cannot make an all-round critique of the performance of nationalised industries, because a lot of the blunders which have hampered the development of these industries were initiated by the Labour Party itself, for example the granting of unlimited C licences which permit firms to carry their own goods by road.

Only the Communist Party can effectively criticise the operation of nationalisation under state monopoly capitalism and show the difference between this and genuine socialist nationalisation. Even so, nationalisation of the current type would have worked better had it not been interfered with and hideously mismanaged by the Government as in the case of the railways.

Those who want to understand the problems facing the British people and the way forward should reject the propaganda of the Tory admen and the tame superficialities offered by the Labour Party, and thoroughly study the Communist Party policy. However the election goes that policy, envisaging as it does basic social change, will provide the only solution to Britain's problems.

General Election Policy

The publication by the Communist Party of a booklet containing all its General Election policy statements[1] has aroused considerable public interest. The Independent Television News and several daily newspapers commented on its publication and it was significant that for the most part comment was confined to a brief description of some of its contents. The reason for this unusual interest is that Communist policy is different from that of the other parties. As the Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties have announced their policies on the various issues the press and other political commentators have almost always concluded that there was very little to choose between them.

This certainly cannot be said of the Communist Party's policy proposals. The Communist Party proposes the raising of wages and salaries whereas the other parties are united in wanting to make industry more profitable for its owners. It proposes a large scale cut in arms production whereas the other parties are for keeping it at the same level or even increasing it and differ only on what type of weapons Britain should concentrate upon manufacturing.

It is significant that a good deal of the press comment on the programme centred around the Communist Party's proposals for defence and housing. These two questions are very closely associated for a cut in defence spending would make more money, materials and labour available for solving the housing problem which in many industrial cities and areas, notably Glasgow, has long since become an appalling problem compelling thousands to live in conditions which the R.S.P.C.A. would not tolerate.

The booklet includes policy statements on defence, economic prosperity, monopolies, colonialism, science, housing, education, pensions and national insurance, youth, the health services, transport, local government finance and racialism. There is also a concise foreword outlining the relationship of the fight for these policies with the Party's socialist aims.

Challenge to the TV Monopoly

The announcement by the Communist Party of its decision to contest the Kinross and West Perthshire constituency at the General Election with the distinguished Scottish poet Hugh McDiarmid as its candidate has aroused widespread interest.

The first point about this contest is that Home will be challenged on his own ground on the whole policy of the Tory Government over the past thirteen years.

But the particular reason for the contest in an area which represents the breaking of new ground for Communist policy and, indeed, for almost any form of militant working class and socialist propaganda and action, is that it is a challenge to the monopoly of political broadcasting by the three parties in Parliament and its near monopoly by the Conservative and Labour Parties.

The legal right of these parties to arrange with the B.B.C. to exclude others from television and radio rests on very thin ice. The decision by Granada television to repeat their 1959 practice of giving all candidates in the region covered by them two

[1] *Communist Policy for Britain*, Communist Party, 2s. 6d.

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minutes on the television plus the handling of television during by-elections shows that the broadcasting authorities have no wish to face a legal challenge on this matter.

The three main parties have agreed among themselves not to challenge the arrangement and have divided broadcasting time between themselves. The Communist Party is neither included nor consulted about these arrangements.

All its candidates are making it known that if any of their opponents takes part in a political broadcast during the General Election campaign they will demand the same facilities from the broadcasting authorities and, in the event of this request being refused, will consider what legal action is necessary to annul the result of the election on the grounds of a breach of the 1949 Representation of the Peoples Act.

As the Prime Minister is certain to appear in Conservative broadcasts, the other political parties together with the broadcasting authorities will no longer be able to ignore the claim of the Communist Party. It is hoped that the pressure of people from all ranks of life and of the many organisations of the Labour movement that have protested against the undemocratic ban will compel the authorities concerned to give up their undemocratic attitude and give the Communist Party its fair portion of time on the air.

Citrine on Marx

How we wish that public men who attempt to refute Marx, would read him first. This applies particularly to Lord Citrine who makes the following remarks in his autobiography (*Men and Work*, Hutchinson, 40s.)

> "The doctrine that the standard of life of all workers must steadily worsen under capitalism has been sedulously preached not only by the Communists but by thousands of other adherents to the theories of Karl Marx. I was never a believer in this doctrine. It seemed to me utter folly for any trade unionist to insist that working class standards under capitalism must become worse and worse . . . what folly it was to proclaim in one sentence that trade unionism was the only instrument at the workers' hand to improve their lot and in the next sentence to tell them that under capitalism their standards must get worse."

Now we find it impossible to believe that Walter Citrine could be active in the Socialist movement in Liverpool for a number of years and never have read *Value, Price and Profit* by Karl Marx which deals precisely with the question of the conditions under which the working class could raise their wages under the capitalist system and the conditions under which the working class would be forced on to the defensive. In the great labour unrest prior to the 1914-18 war *Value, Price and Profit* was the text-book of those who were combating the notion that it was useless to struggle for an increase in wages because the employers would promptly pass the increase on to the consumer in the form of rising prices. Marx showed that this was not so. At the same time he pointed out that capitalism "moves through certain periodical cycles" and that on the downward swing of the cycle (sharp growth of unemployment) the workers must go all out to resist wage cuts. Surely this was self-evident in 1927-28 when Walter Citrine was formulating his wages policy. But let him continue:

> "It followed, therefore, that if the standard of life declined it must be the result of man-made decisions. If some men described as financiers, or capitalists or employers could decree that wages must fall, so other men calling themselves employees or workers could use the force of their organisation to improve standards."

What is left out of this analysis is the capitalist system with its booms and slumps and recurring political crises. When there is great mass unemployment, as there was when Citrine was considering this problem, then the working class independent of their will were in a difficult position and it needed their whole strength, not merely that of a section but of the whole movement, to prevent the capitalists pushing down wages. That was basically what the General Strike of 1926 was about. Yet Citrine was Assistant-Secretary to the T.U.C. when the General Council called off the General Strike arguing that the miners were not prepared to accept a reduction in wages. It was a pity that he did not explain to the Council that "other men calling themselves employees or workers could use the force of their organisation to improve their standards", and insist that the General Strike, which was growing stronger every day, be kept going.

Far be it from us to suggest that we do not need a close analysis of wage struggles and wage policy under state monopoly capitalism. In the works of Marx, however, there are valuable insights, which will facilitate this. One can easily wander round and round in circles, and get nowhere if one ignores Marx.

Death of the N.C.L.C.

And this brings us to the suicide of the National Council of Labour Colleges at the command of the T.U.C.

Anxious to keep in with the Trades Union Congress, the Labour Party and the right-wing trade union bureaucracy generally, the N.C.L.C. had long since ceased to advocate anything resembling a living Marxism, devoted to the problems of the twentieth century.

The question now arises, however, as to who is going to present to trade unionists an overall picture of the capitalist system, in its political and

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economic developments. The T.U.C. courses on industrial relations, collective bargaining, social security etc., leave out the general overall development, and the Labour movement, educationally at least, will sink into non-political trade unionism.

So Marxists had better get busy to bring their doctrine in all its aspects, and its application to present-day circumstances into the daily life of the movement.

No one should allow himself to be fobbed off by the assertion that to give the over-all picture is the job of the Labour Party. Without a theory of society, trade union education will go on without a sense of direction, and without vision. It could even train some workers in aptitudes which would make them efficient servants to the employers as managerial staff, etc.

Birth of the Labour College

Now that the National Council of Labour Colleges is being absorbed by the T.U.C. it is all the more interesting to read the early and militant history of the Labour College.

Lawrence and Wishart will be publishing shortly, at 30s., a most interesting history of *The Central Labour College*, by W. W. Craik. This College, founded in 1909 after a students' strike at Ruskin College, Oxford (the strike was against the enforced resignation of Dennis Hird, the Principal of Ruskin), was an important landmark in the history of independent working-class education. Will Craik was one of the founders, and was for some years the Principal of the Labour College.

For many years the College carried on with trade union support, mainly from the South Wales miners and the railwaymen. It eventually foundered in 1929, due mainly to two causes—one a dispute with its offspring, the National Council of Labour Colleges, as to the relative importance of a central residential college and of provincial classes, and the other the unwillingness of the T.U.C. to provide sufficient financial backing. A look at the curriculum of lecture courses at the College, which is reproduced as an Appendix to Craik's history, will show what a real loss to the movement the collapse of the College was. How much we still miss an educational institution of that kind!

If the N.C.L.C. had remained true to the militant spirit of the founders and early organisers of the Labour College there could have been a far greater resistance to its absorption by the T.U.C.

The book is written in a very lively style and makes excellent reading. It will be a stimulus to new endeavour by all who have genuine socialist education at heart. The last chapter contains splendid arguments on the necessity of the teaching of Marxism within the working-class movement.

Tshombe Returns

The article by Jack Woddis in this issue gives the background of the attitude of the Soviet Union to the Congo. Since this article was written the return of Tshombe to the Congo has opened a new and more serious phase of the struggle for its liberation. United States, South African, and Rhodesian planes are flying in armed supplies for use against the Congo liberation forces. Mercenaries are being recruited openly in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia at between £150 and £200 a month, and compensation of £10,000 for the next-of-kin if they are killed. It seems there's plenty of money coming from somewhere.

No monthly journal can keep pace with events in the Congo, but a most useful informative background of the recent changes is given in a pamphlet *The Tragedy of Congo*, published by the Lagos Study Circle (Nigeria) at 1s. It brings out with extreme clarity the way in which United States imperialism has dominated the whole situation since the Congo won constitutional independence in June 1960.

It gives an account of the growing United States economic penetration, so much so that it has forced Belgian imperialism into the position of a junior partner. By its control of the machinery of the United Nations (as distinct from the General Assembly) the United States was able to fashion the strategy of the commanders of the United Nations troops to secure the removal of Lumumba as Prime Minister, and his subsequent murder.

The pamphlet was published too before the return of Tshombe to the Congo, but it goes a long way to explain why Tshombe returned and whose political and military strategy is now being applied by him.

Soviet Union's Protests on Congo

In connection with the recent events in the Congo, the Soviet Union has issued a statement which underlines once again the principled stand which she has taken all along, on the side of the Congolese people and against imperialist intervention. (See article in this issue by Jack Woddis.)

In a statement issued by the *Tass* Agency, on August 25th, the Soviet Union exposes and sharply condemns the present armed intervention in the affairs of the Congolese people by United States and Belgian imperialism. Stressing that "The United States of America and its NATO partners have long since made joint preparations for armed intervention in the affairs of the Congo", the statement goes on to say:

> "The colonialists want to introduce into the Congo troops of the United States, Belgium and other NATO countries to replace the recently evacuated United Nations force under whose

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> cover . . . the patriotic forces of the Congo were harshly dealt with and Patrice Lumumba was perfidiously murdered. . . ."

The *Tass* statement hails the struggle of the Congolese people against the imperialists, emphasising that "the preceding years have not broken the power and have not paralysed the will of the Congolese patriots. The country has again risen up in defence of her independence."

The statement points out that "The Governments of many African states, guided by the ideals of African unity, have already expressed their willingness to render aid to the forces that are fighting for freedom and national independence". It then adds: "Calls for such assistance will always meet with the response of other peoples, too."

The statement ends with these significant words:

> "Those who encroach on the freedom of the Congolese people cannot but know that the continuation of armed intervention in the domestic affairs of the Congo can lead to an extension of the conflict. The Congolese people have real friends in Africa, and not only in Africa, who will be able to render them the necessary assistance."

Southern Rhodesia

By the time this issue appears the two by-elections in Southern Rhodesia will be in full swing. In one of them Sir Roy Welensky, after announcing his retirement from politics, will be not only a candidate, but is testing the ground to become the new Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia.

This is unlikely, for Mr. Smith, the present Prime Minister (after the London talks) has now declared there will be no unilateral declaration of independence for the European minority of 220,000 as against the African majority of four million.

An interesting aspect of the existing Southern Rhodesian constitution are the qualifications for the franchise. For years the white settlers have argued they are not opposed to Africans having the vote, but have always been in favour of the franchise for the "educated" Africans. At the same time, children of the European minority have eight times a greater chance of education than an African child, of whom less than one in 100 can get to the stage of secondary education. So the European minority try to get it both ways

Though there are twenty Africans to every one European, the European electors number over 70,000 against 11,000 Africans. There are two electoral rolls (*a*) mainly for Europeans, and (*b*) mainly for Africans. Even so, only fifteen candidates can be elected on the (*b*) role out of sixty-five places. The distinction between (*a*) and (*b*) is *not* based on educational qualifications, but on income and ownership of property. These are the alternative qualifications for the (*a*) roll:

1. Income of £720 or ownership of property valued at £1,500.
2. Income of £480 or ownership of property valued at £1,500, *and* completion of a course of primary education.
3. Income of £300 or ownership of property valued at £500, and *four* years' *secondary* education.
4. Appointment to the office of Chief or Headman.

This means the first category of Europeans can be completely illiterate. All they need to have is enough money or property. The lower the income or property qualification, the higher must be the degree of education. But the Chief or headman does not need any kind of education

Now let us look at the (*b*) Roll. In this case there are six alternatives, as follows:

1. Income of £240 or ownership of property valued at £450.
2. Income of £120 or ownership of property valued at £250, *and* two years' secondary education.
3. Over thirty years of age *and* income of £120 or ownership of property valued at £250 *and* primary education.
4. Over thirty years of age *and* income or ownership of property valued at £350.
5. Kraal heads with a following of twenty or more heads of families.
6. Ministers of religion.

Average African wages in 1961 was just under £76. True, about 100,000 (roughly one-sixth) got more than £120 per annum, but 366,000 African workers (more than half) got even less than £76. So there are few Africans who qualify in the first category—though they need not have had primary or secondary education. Here again, even among the Africans it is income or property that counts most. If under thirty years of age they must have an income of £120 *and* two years' secondary education, which only a small minority have managed to get.

Income and property is the real criterion among the white settlers. And while denying African children equal standards of education with European children, they then use educational standards difficult for Africans to obtain when children to deny them the vote when they reach twenty-one years of age. In fact, Sir Roy Welensky, in making a vag promise to improve the existing African franchi has changed his mind about "educated" Africa and now hints his preference for more of the o Africans getting the vote. So much for the inte of the European minority. ue se, ns, lder grity

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Pay-TV

Mahomet discovered the principle: the mountain would not respond to his demand to come to him, so, swallowing his pride, Mahomet is reliably reported to have gone to the mountain. There is an element of this same principle in the film business. Though there are distinct signs that the fall in cinema attendances on both sides of the Atlantic is less pronounced, the patrons are not going to the cinemas anything like the extent that they did some twenty years ago—so the cinema is coming to them.

If there could be a TV set in millions of homes, why not a cinema in the home with quality films for which direct payment would be made? Pay-TV, subscription television or many another title is thought of as the method, and the talk about this is beginning to shift from Parliament to newspaper headlines.

As with any modern matter of broadcasting, the report in June 1962 of the Pilkington Committee is a good starting point. The Committee was opposed to Pay-TV, and the basis of the opposition was on an examination of the economics of it. Briefly:

> "As a method of paying for a television service, subscription must always be more expensive than the licence fee method." (Par. 974.)

Dealing with the idea of experimental Pay-TV in small areas of Britain, Pilkington said:

> "An experiment might not even show whether subscription television is likely to be commercially viable. All it would show with any certainty is whether the particular mechanical systems chosen for experiment would work; and that some systems work is known already." (Par.1,002.)

However, the Government quickly riposted with a White Paper (July 1962), saying that there were "cogent considerations in a contrary sense" to Pilkington's general opposition to Pay-TV.

There are two main technical methods of transmission: the wireless method and the method of transmitting the programmes over cables. On both some system is devised to prevent all and sundry seeing the programmes without paying (or arranging to pay later), and a monitoring device is built into each set. With the wireless method transmission is relatively cheap, but the access-barring system is comparatively expensive; this wireless method has the added disadvantage that the space on the wave-bands is limited with space being reserved for ITV2, colour TV on BBC and possibly also on ITV. With the cable method, the cost of laying wires to each household has to be considered, (though the wire is a cheap kind), but the access-barring—a coin in the slot of the attachment to a TV set operates the "on" switch—is cheap. Though the air waves are not necessarily used in this method in any way, a licence from the Postmaster-General is required by anyone putting out programmes.

The costs of the programmes and the cost of the "ironmongery" that is attached to the householder's TV set are considerable, though they should not be exaggerated, as the possible investors are ones with plenty of financial resources. As has been shown, the cinema owners are very interested; for them it is a question of recapitalisation, selling out their cinema sites to land-developers, and re-investing in the "ironmongery" of Pay-TV and the acquiring of programme material, (which is likely to be substantially on film).

More especially in the production of programmes, (which may be somewhat separated from the activity of putting out programmes), the film producer sees a number of attractive possibilities. The problems of British film-makers in trying to recoup their production costs without too much delay from showing in our cinemas have been dealt with before in these notes and do not need repetition. For them Pay-TV presents the glittering prospect of *quickly* getting back their cost of production "in one evening's showing with only one print of the film." (The exaggeration here is only slight). However the big problem raised by the Government's decision to go ahead with experimental Pay-TV on a limited scale is whether all the areas added together will give a big enough potential audience to enable continuity of viable British Pay-TV films. Can Leicester, Sheffield, Penicuik, Luton, Bedford and some other areas in the North of England and Greater London support a prosperous film-making industry, when the whole of Britain's cinemas have difficulty in being a safe enough market for our film producers?

Pay-TV and the U.S.A.

Any approach to an answer must consider America as a purveyor of popular entertainment. Unless the making of British films for experimental Pay-TV is heavily subsidised, it will be difficult to fix a high quota for the amount of British material that must be shown. The doors are bound to be quite widely left open to America.

In passing a note or two should be given about the Pay-TV controversy in the North American continent, where conditions are very different from these in the U.K. In America there is a large lobby of sponsored TV interests, who see themselves threatened by Pay-TV being extended. A big inducement to the public to install Pay-TV is that there would be no outside advertising to disturb the programmes, and this must be most galling to advertisers, advertising agents and the whole edifice

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of sponsored television. It would be wrong to apply these arguments automatically to the British scene: not only do we not have sponsored TV as America does, but the concentration of the population in Britain is far greater than in America, and so the transmission of Pay-TV programmes, (especially by wire), would be comparatively cheap here.

The more far-sighted American film-making interests recognise the potentialities of the British market for their programmes, especially if, after the three-year experimental period, Pay-TV is extended to the whole of Britain, and if the individual area franchise-holders are linked by a nation-wide network. But already some shape is being formed for Pay-TV here. The Telemeter company is expected to start operations in the Merton, Mitcham, Wimbledon and Morden areas of London in March 1965 with transmissions limited at first to three hours a day; according to a report of its chairman, David Kingsley, feature cinema films will be the major factor in Telemeter's programming, but they intend to obtain a number of programmes made by Subscription Television in America, as well as to produce specialised and educational programmes.

From this, however, it should not be thought that British studios are only capable of the "small fry" material with American know-how fitting Hollywood for the monopoly of the lush, profit-making entertainment programmes. Some high quality Pay-TV films have already been made here, and a British production, (Laurence Olivier's Chichester Theatre production of *Uncle Vanya*), was chosen to launch America's first Pay-TV service, Subscription Television.

The Arts in Greater London

Certain important developments are likely to take place in the organisation of the arts in the new Greater London as a result of steps being taken by the Standing Committee for the Arts of the London Council of Social Service.

The demands upon the Committee for advice and Information and even for organisation had increased so much of late years that the London Council had had to ask whether the increased expenses (though modest in themselves) could continue to be met by the Council and asked the committee to consider what its future might be and whether finance could not be obtained from other sources. The Committee therefore set up a sub-committee to go into the whole matter. Its report has been submitted to the full committee and approved.

With the setting up of the Greater London Council in mind, the report goes further than the London Council of Social Services' requirements. It suggests the setting up of a Greater London Association for the Arts with representatives of the thirty-two Boroughs and the G.L.C., the L.C.S.S., local Arts Councils, arts organisations and individual members, which ultimately might be independent of the London Council of Social Service. Finance would be obtained on the lines of the N.E. Association for the Arts, where local authorities give the product of a $\frac{1}{4}$d. rate and contributions are received from industry. Its functions are set out in the present terms of reference of the Arts Committee, which are very comprehensive and capable of great expansion, which expansion has only been restricted hitherto by lack of income.

The next step will be the calling of a conference of local art councils, at which they will be asked to consider a resolution on the lines of the report, after which a larger conference will be called to which representatives of local authorities will be invited, where it is hoped that the Association will be formally set up and financial arrangements worked out.

Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations

Marx's notes on *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* are being published this month at 25s. by Lawrence and Wishart. The English translation is by Jack Cohen, and there is an explanatory introduction by Eric Hobsbawm.

The translation and publication of this work of Marx is a direct result of the recent discussion on "stages of historical development" by the History Group of the Communist Party and in the pages of *Marxism Today*. This is the fullest and most important text by Marx on the problems then discussed. It has been supplemented in the Lawrence and Wishart edition by some extracts from Marx's and Engels's *German Ideology* and from their correspondence bearing on the same problems.

Despite its importance, and the flood of light it throws on Marx's scientific approach to the interpretation of the actual course of development in all those historical epochs which preceded capitalism, this text has been almost unknown and generally neglected. It is certainly an antidote to schematism and dogmatism about the historical periods of slave-society and feudalism, and an aid to understanding what is most essential in Marx's method of studying history.

Marx himself wrote in 1858 that these notes of his were "the result of fifteen years' research, that is to say of the best years of my life". However, they remained unpublished until issued in Moscow in 1939-41. Even then they were generally overlooked because of the war. There was an edition in Berlin in 1952. But the present English translation is the first into West European languages except for an Italian translation in 1956.

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The Role of Railways in British Transport Today

J. Broadbent

Introduction—why a Discussion?

TRANSPORT may at first sight not seem to be a very important question today for the working-class of Britain. It has of course always been the policy of the British labour movement to oppose fares increases when profits are made from the provision of passenger transport. But the present crisis of the railways, the policy of the Tory Government which Dr. Beeching is in the process of implementing, the danger of losing bus as well as rail services in rural areas, the toll of accidents on the roads, the enormous rate of increase of vehicles expected in the future, the ever-increasing noise and air pollution in urban areas, and the ruin of town centres by traffic and by new road systems which still fail to cater for the new traffic, are rapidly showing that only a properly-considered basic attitude can deal with the ramifications of the problem of transport in a densely populated capitalist country such as ours.

Transport in a modern society

Mechanical transport has become of vital importance in modern industrial society. Much is, of course, unnecessary in capitalist Britain. Biscuits are made in London and transported to Glasgow, and biscuits made in Glasgow are transported to London (arguments about the desirability of variety are of course nonsense: recipes could easily be exchanged in a socialist society and the advantages of large-scale production retained by distribution in areas near the factory concerned). In every town, several different laundries each have a van calling in the same street, although each could easily be confined to one zone (with much greater ease of popular control to ensure good service and quality). A large proportion of the commercial travellers and their cars are completely unnecessary. Examples could be quoted almost indefinitely.

Nevertheless, efficient and speedy transport of persons and goods is necessary in any society. Large-scale production is often, though not always, a prerequisite of low labour content, which alone can give a high standard of living in a socialist economy. This demands transport both to bring workers and materials to the point of production and to distribute the products. Furthermore, large-scale production demands widespread administration and interchange of technique, resulting in large scale travel; rising living standards permit more travel for entertainment, education, holidays, etc.

In a capitalist society, however, as transport is a source of profit like any other commodity, transport questions are clouded over by the question of ownership of the different systems and units. We ought to be able to be concerned basically with the *availability* of means of transport (and these means will be very varied): this is all the citizens of a socialist society have to concern themselves with, when they have taken all forms under their own ownership. We in Britain are not yet at this stage, but in considering our present problems, have to understand the ways in which our capitalist society is preventing rational solutions to these problems.

A high standard of living is not only a matter of what we can buy with our wages, but also what services, facilities and amenities are available to us. Also for socialists (particularly in a capitalist society) it is important in any problem to search for and give special attention to collective solutions, to ensure that the excessive weight given to private, personal and individual solutions by capitalist society is combated.

Historical Background

Railways came into being to satisfy the needs of society as a whole, but (in Britain) were developed primarily by capitalists to make a profit, not to provide a service. They were mostly built 70 to 100 years ago, very few more having been built in recent decades. Hence if railways have still a role to play today, it follows that all the present routes are not necessarily sacred in present circumstances and conversely, that *new* lines must be necessary in some places.

The dominant physical feature of the railway, the fixed rail, gives the system its inherent characteristic of the necessity for discipline (which has both advantages and disadvantages). This in turn makes it necessary, or at least highly desirable, to have unified control over the whole system, and hence national ownership of railway systems is common in many capitalist countries.

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The almost universal use of the steel wheel on the steel rail also is characteristic, and this also has advantages (such as low rolling resistance, ease of passage of electrical control signals through the rails etc.) as well as disadvantages.

A major factor in transport during the last forty years, indeed in society as a whole, has been the development of road transport, a new technique fulfilling new needs and itself creating new needs. A characteristic of road transport, of the greatest importance to our discussion, is that it is financed very differently from the railways; we shall return to this point later.

Motor cars, lorries and buses can and do operate more or less satisfactorily under private ownership within certain limits, and intrinsically have the advantage of flexibility and door-to-door operation, if other factors permit these advantages to be realised. But as the number of motor vehicles in a given area increases, a change in quality occurs: the degree of flexibility is increasingly limited, door-to-door transport becomes less and less possible, and disadvantages of fumes, noise, accidents and cost of control become dominant.

The almost unlimited growth in the number of road vehicles, now taking place in most capitalist countries, is not solely due to the intrinsic convenience and value of this form of transport, but is also powerfully influenced by social factors. The profits at stake (from manufacturing, distribution, servicing, etc.) are enormous and of course result in propaganda urging all to *possess*, not merely to use. In addition to this relatively crude aim, however, there is the more subtle bourgeois emphasis on a *personal* solution of passenger and goods transport problems, encouraging people to abandon thought of collective solutions to the problems of society generally. This philosophical aspect is most important.

The U.S.S.R.

Much is to be learned from the U.S.A., the country par excellence of the motor vehicle, but for us socialists the case of the U.S.S.R. could well be more important, although the circumstances of the U.S.S.R. are often different from ours, and even socialist countries do, and will continue to, develop differently from one another. Not very much has yet been published to indicate fully the policies likely to be followed as the U.S.S.R. pursues the rapid development planned for the next five or six years, but a number of statements of the greatest significance, both internally and to the traffic-weary capitalist world, have been made.

Soviet Weekly quoted a speech given by Premier Khrushchov at Vladivostok on October 6, 1959 (the year of his visit to the U.S.A.):

> "More and more often nowadays, Americans are declaring that they have far more motor cars than the Soviet Union. It is true that there are many cars in America, but we have no intention of giving ourselves the aim of competing with the Americans in the output of cars.
>
> "We are developing and shall continue to develop our manufacture of motor vehicles—but not in the way the Americans are doing.
>
> "We shall produce a large number of cars—but not just yet. We want to establish a different system in the use of cars from that in the capitalist countries. Our cars will be used more rationally than the Americans use them: common vehicle pools will be developed more widely, from which people will get cars for the journey they want to make.
>
> "Why should a person have to cudgel his brains over where to park, why should he have to bother about it? Such a system will better meet the requirements of the people, and answer the interests both of society as a whole and of each individual citizen."

This approach was developed further by remarks Mr. Khrushchov made during his visit to France in 1960 and quoted by the *Daily Worker* on April 22 1960:

> "We shall increase the output of cars, establishing a wide system of hire garages . . .
>
> "When anyone needs a car he will go to a garage, hire it and go wherever he wants. When he is finished with it, he will return it to the garage and he will have no further cares."
>
> With such a system, said Mr. Khrushchov, only about a tenth to a fifteenth the number of cars would be needed. "A proprietorial capitalist way of using cars does not suit us. We shall introduce the Socialist method," he added.

One has to admit that these are very brief statements of a policy with many ramifications, but they are obviously of the greatest interest.

The U.S.A.

It is unnecessary to deal at length with the situation which has developed in the U.S.A., pushed on by the domination of that country's life and institutions by the motorcar manufacturing and oil monopolies.

The number of vehicles is at present 410 per 1,000 persons. The saturation level (see Buchanan, *Traffic in Towns*, 1963) may be of the order of 550 vehicles per 1,000 persons.

Since 1945, 300 communities have lost all public transport services they once possessed. In many places the only buses in existence are those used to take children to and from school. The writer has never visited the U.S.A. but finds it difficult to believe that all children, old people and unemployed can command personal transport to get about and are not degraded by the absence of public transport into begging lifts or prevented from travelling altogether.

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Even if it is assumed that a sufficiently large number of cars could provide a satisfactory passenger transport system, a vast expenditure on roads is required. In many areas of the U.S.A. the vested interests concerned have ensured that this has been done: it has caused enormous damage to city amenities, has swallowed up great acreages of land and *still has not solved the problems of congestion.* New facilities for traffic always generate more traffic, and foster the illusion that it is physically possible to make such a system work.

At last, various public authorities are coming to the realisation that attention must be given to public transport. The Kennedy administration appropriated £270 million for a system of grants to local bodies for the re-establishment of public transport systems. In autumn of 1963, San Francisco finally decided to proceed with a $790 million scheme for a 75-mile suburban railway system, providing for 70 m.p.h. trains with a peak-hour interval of 90 seconds, and including a 4-mile underwater tube across the Bay. In 1958 the City of Philadelphia agreed to pay the local railway company for an increased service at reduced fares on two lines and also to subsidise the fares for transfer to buses feeding the trains: they paid $25 million from City funds for new electric trains used by the Company. *Modern Transport* reported in 1963 that income on these services had risen to that prior to the lowering of fares. Many other instances could be quoted of American cities now considering or actually starting the rehabilitation of neglected public transport systems or the building of new ones.

Britain Today

Here is a classic instance of the crisis facing Britain. Capitalist development is never even, and Britain's monopoly capitalism has lagged behind the U.S.A. in the unlimited production of motor vehicles. This ought to give us the chance of learning from America's mistakes, but all our Tory Government has contributed is the Beeching policy of whittling away the rail system and discouraging its use, and the Buchanan Report's philosophy of attempting to provide physically for an unlimited increase in the numbers of road vehicles. On the other hand, the U.S.S.R., a socialist country, has a policy of sane and balanced development of all forms of transport, being evolved of course to suit their own conditions, but clearly having valuable lessons for us, and yet not even accurately stated, far less understood or discussed, in the Buchanan Report (*Traffic in Towns*, Steering Group Report para. 29). Britain's circumstances and problems are in many ways different from those of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., but Britain's Tory leaders can neither heed the warnings from one nor study the developments and rational thoughts from the other.

Britain's small size and large population makes us particularly vulnerable in nuclear warfare and is one justification for a unilateralist stand. Similarly these factors make our traffic problem different in some respects from other countries. Although the number of cars per 1,000 persons in Britain is not as high as in the U.S.A., the number of vehicles per mile of road is already higher. In 1962 there were $10\frac{1}{2}$ million road vehicles (including $6\frac{1}{2}$ million cars) and estimates indicate that by 1970 there will be 18 million (12 million cars) and by 1980, 27 million (19 million cars), unless present trends are altered.

Road Congestion

As already stated, no one would deny the need for a certain number of cars, buses and lorries. But equally there is a role for rail transport with its facility for bulk transport and controlled operation, and as a means of avoiding some of the bad features of large-scale road transport. At present, only 10 per cent of Central London commuters come in by car: if 25 per cent more were to do so, the parked cars would occupy an area of 1.9 square miles. The Institution of Civil Engineers has estimated that road congestion will cost £2,000 million per annum by 1970. So one could continue quoting examples and figures: suffice it to say that it is obvious that there is a problem, rapidly worsening, that a socialist government would have to provide an answer and that the Communist Party in particular needs to show the thoroughgoing solution possible under a new Labour Government with Communist Party participation.

Life in Britain would verge on the intolerable if 27 million road vehicles were operating, and clearly steps will be necessary to limit numbers. As already stated, many drivers wish to *own* cars, and many traders wish to *own* lorries, not because of the convenience (which could equally well derive from hiring vehicles when needed) but because they are subjected to pressures to own from those interests making profit in producing, distributing and servicing vehicles and in feeding them with fuel.

Remove the profit incentive by nationalising the motor monopolies and oil monopolies, and the incentive to own vehicles personally, rather than have the *use* of them when required, will be greatly reduced. This may necessitate turning over some motor factories to other products, and here again such action would only be acceptable if the changeover was planned in a way which is only possible under socialist nationalisation.

At the same time, it is necessary to improve greatly the standard of service given by public

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transport. In many ways, large and small, great improvements in convenience are desirable and possible. It is intended here only to develop certain points regarding the railways, but the underlying policy should be the development of all forms of public transport and the maximum discouragement of private transport, not by prohibition, but by removing the profit motive and vastly improving public transport.

The 1962 Transport Act and Beeching

The "nationalised" British Railways operated at a profit until 1955 since when the deficit has grown year by year. In 1961, working expenses absorbed £562 million but receipts were only £475 million; in addition "central charges", mostly interest, absorbed £72 million. The financial results of the railways are very closely linked with the basic economic state of the country, being such large carriers of coal, minerals and steel, but this deficit and, even more, the trend since 1955, is overwhelmingly due to the reduction in freight carryings since the 1953 Act which de-nationalised most of British Road Services and allowed more or less unlimited competition by road hauliers.

There might be a certain amount of economic sense in allowing freight charges to determine whether goods were carried by road or rail if the charges were based on a comparable system of allocating costs. But this is far from being the case. The Railways, being a self-contained system, can and must collect figures showing 100 per cent of the costs involved, although, until recently, analysis in respect of particular parts of the system was very difficult: even now, whatever praise may be showered on Dr. Beeching, very little *real* progress has been made in this direction.

Comparable figures for the cost of road operations, even global figures, just do not exist. The National Council for Inland Transport have attempted some estimates, and have rendered a public service by calling for an investigation, as an essential basis for deciding how much of the costs of providing road and rail transport shall be paid by the user and how much by the community generally by such means as taxation. Figures quoted give some idea of the scale involved, but these are very approximate.

Furthermore, the capital invested by the railways in their track, as well as all other equipment, is expected to pay interest. Money invested in roads (with one or two exceptions such as the Mersey Tunnel and the Forth Road Bridge), once spent, is not expected to pay interest. No accurate figures exist for the capital value of our roads, although an estimate of £40,000 million has been made, and if this was regarded in the same light as railway track, and was expected to pay interest at say even only 3 per cent, the £1,200 million would make the railway "deficit" look pretty small.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

	million	million
Government	£172	
Local Authorities	£125	
	Total (say)	£300
Police, Signals and Traffic Control ..		130
Accidents		230
Congestion (British Road Federation estimates)		500
Damage to Buildings		100
		£1,260
Motor Fuel Tax, Licences, Purchase Tax		650
"Subsidy" to be paid by all Taxpayers		£610

Again, when figures of the cost of running the rail system are bandied about, it is common practice to ignore the fact that railway figures include the cost of constructing vehicles. Road vehicles, in the main, are however purchased privately, but a million cars are put on the road in one year, at say £500 each, and compared with this, the community is spending a very meagre sum on railway development, whether on vehicles or other needs.

The British Railways deficit, which worries the Tories so much, does not necessarily need to worry us: we can pay as much through fares and charges and as much through taxation, as we choose. But clearly we need to have a policy.

If we chose to relieve the Railways of all interest charges (£72 million in 1961) and either expropriate the stockholders (except for personal hardship cases) or transfer the responsibility for interest to the Exchequer, the remainder of the 1961 deficit, £87 million, would be almost exactly equal to the cost (£85 million) of the maintenance of the track and structures. As a first immediate step along the road of ensuring that the country retains the value of a railway system of a suitable kind, it is necessary to transfer track costs to the Exchequer as well as to remove interest burdens.

Railways Abroad

The doctrinaire insistence of the Tory Government and other spokesmen of the British capitalist class that the railways must show a commercial profit makes a strong contrast with the attitude of the other capitalist countries, perhaps not so tainted with the imperialist neglect of investment at home. Articles in *The Times* in 1963 stated that the West German Railways, whose system is in many respects comparable with ours, received a subsidy in 1963 of £93 million, and that investment in improve-

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ments alone had been £900 million in the last four years (including £260 million in 1962). This compares with about £100 million per annum in Britain.

The Times also outlined the French system whereby the Government meets certain well-defined costs such as some track costs, staff benefits and pensions, and concessionary fares: it is claimed that these do not blunt the commercial initiative of the management. Some closures still take place, and, if objections are raised, an inquiry is held and in suitable cases a subsidy is provided from central funds or alternative road transport is arranged: this is facilitated by the close co-operation between the French Railways and the associated road transport organisation (S.C.E.T.A.). It is interesting that any land surplus to the requirements of French Railways may be sold only to other public authorities: the Tories here are busy handing over railway land to property speculators, or in other words, we are losing control over own property for a mess of pottage. Land in Britain is becoming so valuable as to be almost beyond price.

Most other European countries have various forms of licensing systems for public and private road haulage so designed as to prevent the complete erosion of the railways.

Technical Equipment

The other remarkable aspect of the policy of the British capitalist class, who originally led the world in railway development, is their failure to equip the British system in recent years so as to enable it to meet the challenge of road transport under the regime of "free competition" which they ostensibly hold so dear. The British railway system has been starved of capital for technical development for forty years. Main line electrification, recommended by the Weir Report of 1930, is now just beginning. Less dramatic, but even more important, is the provision of an efficient braking system for freight trains: Britain's is the only major system in the world still to have unbraked goods wagons, and although these are being altered or scrapped rapidly now, they have been and still are a major drawback to efficient operation, and even now it is still the cumbersome and slow-acting vacuum system that is used. The problems of changeover from this to the compressed air system, while maintaining daily use of hundreds of thousands of wagons and thousands of locomotives and coaches, would of course be enormous: this typifies the challenge presented by the situation, but British engineers and railwaymen have met challenges in the past and would welcome the technical and organisational task that this would represent, instead of redundancy and speed-up.

Automatic couplings, and improved methods of goods handling, particularly road/rail transfer, and many other matters have cried out for research and development for years. They are only now receiving some quite insufficient attention.

The British capitalist class failed to invest enough in the technical development of the railways during the period of the four private companies (from 1929), they expected the railways to stand the strain of the 1939-45 war, and then after nationalisation they still failed to invest enough, both during Labour Government control and during Tory control (except for the much-vaunted modernisation programme from 1955, far below the needs after so many years of neglect, and half of it for routine replacements that would have been required in any case). The attitude of the French and German capitalists, whose systems had suffered even worse than ours during the war, forms a striking contrast.

These remarks are not to be taken as belittling the value of the 1955 Modernisation Plan. The improvements being made are in the main to be welcomed, and here again Marples and Beeching are at fault in expecting an improved financial result before even this meagre plan, timed to take 10 to 15 years, could come to fruition.

This technical backwardness produces an objective inability to compete, due to low labour productivity, high transit time and so on. It also tends to affect the morale of the workers employed and to reduce the initiative of the railway management, both local and national, although low wages and salaries are also a very important factor here.

A most important effect on the general public is created: passengers and traders tend to consider the railway an out-moded form of transport, and then in some cases, do not use rail even when it has the advantage. Here again, there is a striking contrast with the attitude of the public in many other countries.

The Beeching Policy

The failure, typical of British big business, to understand the importance of capital investment at home and the consequent twisting of the attitude of large sections of the population, is coupled with the Tory Government's slavish attachment to their dogma and doctrines about free competition and the necessity to make a profit, in their 1962 Transport Act: this removed any obligation on the new Railways Board to provide a service to anyone, gave the Board "commercial" freedom to accept or reject traffic as they chose, and made profitability the sole criterion of their operations.

It is typical of the crisis of British Toryism that the Beeching Report, which purports to begin to work out this policy, and which was received with nauseating adulation by big business and Right-Wing Labour alike, does not promise elimination

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of the "deficit", but only that a substantial reduction in the deficit will have been made by 1970. The scale involved is exemplified by the saving estimated to accrue by the closures of passenger services envisaged: this is only £18 million per annum. Incidentally, if we wished to subsidise all of this from taxation, it is equivalent to only three days' expenditure on armaments.

There is no doubt to an objective observer that the answer lies in the direction of increasing the traffic on the railway system, even on the marginal parts of the system, and improving the efficiency with which it is carried. This can be achieved by a policy on the following lines:

(*a*) Abolition of interest and transfer of track and station costs to the Exchequer.

(*b*) Much greater and more rapid technical improvement, particularly electrification and improved freight handling methods.

(*c*) A Government policy of increasing, not reducing, traffic handled on rail, and reducing traffic (of all possible kinds) on road.

(*d*) New methods of co-operation with the general public, both nationally and locally (with local authorities, users' associations, etc.).

(*e*) Improvement in the morale of the railway workers by improved wage levels, pensions, etc., and by re-education or dismissal of higher management not convinced of the necessity of public service from a nationalised undertaking.

(*f*) Possibly a few closures of lines after careful consideration of all social factors involved and future developments, but much more important, the construction of new lines, stations, sidings, etc., to serve new communities and industries.

(*g*) A degree of co-ordination of road and rail services far greater than we have yet known, particularly of passenger services.

Political aspects

Public transport is of vital concern to everyone and the interest evinced in the Beeching Report is a token of this. In a way more easily understood than many aspects of foreign policy or of economics, Beeching illustrates the conflict in Britain today between the idea of production for use and service to the community and the conception of profit as the major concern.

The closures are therefore one of the most important political issues of the day. The vote in the House of Commons in April 1963 was the first occasion when the automatic Tory majority was reduced. Local organisation against the closures and for development of the railways can draw people of all shades of political opinion into the fight against the Tories.

The Soviet Union and National Liberation

Jack Woddis

In our August issue we published the first of some short studies on the Soviet Union's relations with the national liberation movements. The second of these studies, given below, is devoted to the Congo.

II THE SOVIET UNION AND THE CONGO

In the course of the current discussions in the international Communist movement, the Chinese Communist Party has made certain allegations concerning Soviet policy towards the Congo.

Briefly the Chinese allegations are:

(1) The Soviet Union, by supporting the bringing of the U.N. forces into the Congo, paved the way for U.S. intervention and for Lumumba's death.

(2) After the murder of Lumumba, the Soviet Union, by continuing to support the U.N. action and by "encouraging" Antoine Gizenga to participate in the new Adoula Government set up in Leopoldville on July 26th, 1961, weakened the national liberation movement and made it easier for the United States to gain control of the Congo.

(1) The Bringing In of the United Nations Forces

Regarding the bringing in of U.N. troops in 1960, the following are the essential facts. The Congo became independent in June 1960. The uncompromising speech delivered by the Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, in the presence of the Belgian King who had come to Leopoldville for the independence ceremony, made it clear that under Lumumba's leadership the Congolese people would firmly oppose imperialism in its new neo-colonialist guises.

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The mutiny of the Congolese troops of the Force Publique against their European officers also showed that imperialist plans of a continuation of their domination of the Congo after independence were unlikely to succeed without further imperialist intervention. Within a few weeks of the declaration of independence, the Belgians began to pour their troops into the Congo. In the face of this open aggression by a foreign imperialist power against a new sovereign state, Lumumba appealed to the U.N. to act according to its Charter and functions.

There were further factors in the situation which it is important to bear in mind. Lumumba, his country divided by tribalism and political division, with a shortage of trained cadres in every department of state, and the Belgian troops at his country's throat, was in a desperate position. At that time the tide of African independence had only begun; there were only 12 independent African states, compared with 34 today; the new States were, in the main, just coming into being and had their own acute problems; neither the African leaders and governments, not the peoples and their national parties had yet fully experienced the new tactics of neo-colonialism, and there were great illusions concerning the United Nations.

Lumumba's Appeal

In this situation, Lumumba appealed directly to the U.N. Security Council for military aid to drive out the Belgians. It should be stressed, especially in view of the subsequent misrepresentations of the terms specified for U.N. forces to enter the Congo, that the telegram sent to the United Nations Secretary-General on July 12, 1960 by President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Lumumba specifically said that "the aim of the assistance requested is not to restore internal order in the Congo, but to defend the national territory against the act of aggression from Belgian troops." The United Nations was thus faced with a clear and urgent responsibility, that of defending the young Republic of the Congo against Belgian imperialist aggression, of ensuring her political independence and preserving her national unity and territorial integrity.

As a member of the Security Council the Soviet Union strove to ensure that the Security Council's decision would be one that would direct the U.N. member states to assist the Congolese Central Government. The consequence was the important U.N. Security Council Resolution of July 14, 1960:

> "Considering the request for military assistance addressed to the Secretary-General by the President and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo:
>
> 1. CALLS UPON the Government of Belgium to withdraw their troops from the territory of the Republic of the Congo;
> 2. DECIDES to authorise the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps, in consultation with the Government of the Republic of the Congo, to provide the Government with such military assistance, as may be necessary, until, through the efforts of the Congolese Government with the technical assistance of the United Nations, the national security forces may be able, in the opinion of the Government, to meet fully their tasks;
> 3. REQUESTS the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council as appropriate."

This resolution is absolutely clear. Belgium was to withdraw her troops. The U.N. was to provide military forces to the *Congolese Government*, to act "*in consultation with*" *that Government*, to continue to provide "military assistance" until through the "*efforts of the Congolese Government*", with the "technical assistance" of the U.N., the Congolese forces themselves were able, "*in the opinion of the Government*, to meet fully their tasks."

Security Council Resolution Violated

It was clear that the U.N. military forces were intended to be subordinate to the Central Government ("to provide the Government with such military assistance"), to act only in consultation with the Central Government, and to have merely the status of "technical assistance"—which means no political interference in Congolese affairs. Further, the first clause of the July 14, 1960 resolution shows that the U.N. decision was taken not in respect of "maintaining law and order", which the capitalist press tried to pretend (and to carry through this pretence they suppressed all publication of the actual resolution), but was a resolution motivated and occasioned by the intervention of the Belgian troops.

This resolution was naturally supported by the Soviet Union. No one could object to it. There was nothing wrong with supporting such a resolution. The danger to the Congo arose not from the resolution but through the refusal of the imperialist powers, entrenched in the U.N. Secretariat and apparatus, to put the resolution into practice.

They completely ignored the resolution, used the U.N. troops to pursue a policy against the Central Government and never, right up to the time of their withdrawal, did they place their troops at the disposal of the Central Government, as the U.N. Security Council resolution had specified.

The Security Council decisions were openly violated and the U.N. Charter itself ignored. The Security Council, as a collective body (and the Soviet Union as a member of the Security Council) was completely excluded from decisions concerning which U.N. member states should participate in the

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carrying out of the July 14 resolution, which U.N. member states should direct and provide officers for the operation, how many troops and arms should be sent and by which states etc. Instead of the U.N. Security Council being in control, this function was usurped by the U.N. executive organs, headed by the Secretary-General.

Figures cited by Soviet authorities at the end of 1960 showed that for the United Nations Congo operation, 45 military staff officers came from the United States and its allies, none from the socialist countries; 546 representatives in police and liaison units in the Congo came from the Western powers, 24 from Africa, and none from the socialist countries; 220 non-military staff came from the Western powers, none from the socialist countries.

The Soviet Union, throughout the crisis, strove to get the correct U.N. resolution carried out. At the same time, it did what it could to give direct assistance to Lumumba.

Commenting on the Soviet Union's attitude and its strong condemnation of the imperialist aggression in the Congo, Colin Legum, in his book, *Congo Disaster*, wrote: "The language of the Russians gladdened Lumumba's heart, as indeed it might. Here was one power which was ready to deal with the Belgians." (p. 134). As regards the actual help, Mr. Legum notes: "Soviet aid, unlike others, went directly to the Congolese Government, instead of being channelled through the U.N. The Russians delivered 100 military trucks and 29 Ilyushin transport planes, together with 200 technicians." (p. 141). He points out that this aid enabled Lumumba "to subdue the dissident 'Diamond State' proclaimed by Albert Kalonji in Kasai", adding (p. 162) that "Without the help of Russian transport, Lumumba could not have undertaken that mission, since all planes and other suitable transport in the country were in the hands of the U.N., whose Command would not allow them to be used against the rebel government." The Soviet Union also sent food, medical teams and equipment.

Soviet assistance to Lumumba and his government continued right up to the moment when the American puppets, Kasavubu and Mobutu, seized power, captured Lumumba, and broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Government, compelling it to close down its Legation in Leopoldville on September 17, 1960.

(2) Lumumba's Death

The responsibility for Lumumba's death lies with the imperialists—especially those of the United States—and with Congolese reactionary puppets who carried out their orders.

The Chinese comrades have given currency to the idea that the Soviet Government was responsible for Lumumba's death. The *Hsinhua* news bulletin of August 25, 1963, published, with apparent approval, the speech made at a Peking rally on August 24, at which A. M. Kheir (a Sudanese working in Peking and who has been denounced by the Sudanese Communist Party and the Sudanese Peace Committee) said:

> "I condemn the Soviet delegation and its supporters for openly standing on the side of the most reactionary forces in Japan, with the right-wingers and fascists, against the progressives, genuine peace fighters in Japan . . . Those who prettify Kennedy and call him a man working for peace, helped to murder Lumumba, the son of Africa, and do everything in their power to make the Africans lay down their arms in the battle against imperialism and colonialism, are not friends of the Africans."

According to the Soviet journal, *New Times* (August 21, 1963) a similar statement was made in 1963 by a Chinese representative at Hiroshima, Chu Tsu-tsi, who alleged that the U.S.S.R. "had helped American imperialism murder Lumumba."

The same slanderous implications are contained in the document, *Apologists of Neo-Colonialism*, issued by the Editorial Departments of the Chinese *People's Daily* and *Red Flag*, October 22, 1963. This document asserts that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was "anxious to 'co-operate' with U.S. imperialism in putting out the spark in the Congo."

In contrast to these disgraceful calumnies, Lumumba himself, in one of his last statements, declared:

> "*The Soviet Union proved to be the only one of the great powers which, from the very beginning, supported the people of the Congo in their struggle.* I wish to convey the deepest gratitude of the entire people of the Congo to the Soviet people and to Premier Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchov personally for the timely and great moral support the U.S.S.R. gave to the young Republic of the Congo in its struggle against the imperialists and colonialists."

(3) Gizenga's Participation in the Recalled Parliament

After the murder of Lumumba, and the driving of the Soviet representatives from Leopoldville, the Soviet Union continued to be accredited to the legal Government which carried on in Stanleyville under the leadership of Lumumba's colleague, Antoine Gizenga. This government, the only legal heir to that formerly led by Lumumba, carried on for several months under considerable difficulties. It was supported by the most progressive African states but not by some others—and the refusal of the Sudan Government to co-operate meant that material assistance could not be sent in, neither

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from the socialist countries nor from the U.A.R. and other African states wishing to assist the Government in Stanleyville.

Meanwhile the U.N. forces continued their interference in Congolese politics; and the Anglo-Belgian imperialist ultras tore wealthy Katanga away from the control of the Central Government. Soviet attempts to make the U.N. Security Council adhere to the July 14, 1960, resolution were unsuccessful; the U.N. forces continued to act illegally (i.e. not in accordance with the U.N. Charter).

Finally, on February 21, 1961, the Security Council adopted a resolution calling on the U.N., in view of the killing of the Congolese leaders, Lumumba and his colleagues, and the growing "danger of widespread civil war in the Congo," and the "threat to international peace and security," to take "all appropriate measures to prevent the occurrence of civil war in the Congo . . ." including "the use of force, if necessary, in the last resort."

It was on the basis of this resolution that U.N. force was used to break Tshombe's regime in Katanga and end the secession.

Even if the resolution was a dangerous precedent, the Soviet Union was not well-placed to oppose it. The Afro-Asian nations were in favour of it. "In this climate", explains Conor Cruise O'Brien (*To Katanga and Back*: pp. 97–8) the Soviet Union "despite its radical hostility to Hammarskjold and the U.N. Congo operation as a whole", did not feel "able to veto measures agreed on by the United States and the Afro-Asian countries."

Thus the Soviet Union, in the Security Council, voted for U.N. military force to be used against Tshombe. But because of the subsequent manner in which the operation was handled and because the U.N. Secretariat had continually, from the very beginning of the Congo operation, acted without consulting the Security Council (which it was obliged to do under the U.N. Charter), the Soviet Union refused to pay towards the U.N. operation in the Congo.

The Soviet Union is not alone in refusing to pay for the U.N. operation in the Congo. By January 1, 1963, no less than sixty-seven states had taken a similar stand.

Congolese Parliament Recalled

Meanwhile there had been changes in the Congolese political situation. At this stage it appeared to the most patriotic sections of the Congolese people that the severance of the rich state of Katanga was the greatest menace. For this reason, together with the difficulties of maintaining the separate government in Stanleyville in the new situation, the leaders of the two most progressive parties (Lumumba's M.N.C. and Gizenga's African Solidarity Party), with other elements opposed to the reactionary Leopoldville Government, decided to participate in July, 1961, in the recall of the Congolese Government (which had not met for months), in order to try to establish a new united Government which could uphold Congolese sovereignty and regain control over Katanga.

The decision to participate in the recalled Parliament was freely taken by Gizenga and other progressive Congolese leaders themselves.

The recalled Congolese Parliament (July 26, 1961), revealed that the patriotic forces were still strong. Gizenga became one of the two Vice-Premiers, and the M.N.C. leader, Gbenye, became Minister of the Interior. Later, however, by repression and corruption, the U.S., operating through the reactionary wing of the new Adoula Government, was able to deal a heavy blow to the patriotic forces once again. Gizenga was imprisoned and U.S. control strengthened. (In March, 1964, the Congolese Parliament was forcibly dissolved, and a number of its deputies compelled to flee.

The policies followed by Gizenga, Gbenye, and other leaders after Lumumba's death were their own policies. One can hold different views concerning the tactics of the Congolese leaders, but it is entirely unwarranted for the Chinese comrades to attribute the policies of Gizenga and his colleagues to "persuasion" by the Soviet comrades.

Still less justifiable is the attempt of the Chinese comrades to shift the blame for the setbacks in the Congo from those really responsible, the imperialists, on to the shoulders of the Soviet Union, "the only one of the great powers which, from the beginning, supported the people of the Congo in their struggle". (Lumumba).

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Studying/Writing Working Class History

Lionel Munby

ONE suspects that some Communists in Britain, if they were honest with themselves, would admit to a point of view not so far from Henry Ford's "History is bunk". "We've too many important, immediate jobs to do to have time for playing about with the past; it's dead and gone, what use is it to us?" Practicalism, in this and many other forms, has long been the great virtue *and the vice* of the British working-class movement. "An ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory". In practice this only too often means that even Communists try to make do with an ounce of theory: a cursory reading of the *Daily Worker* and an occasional political discussion in the branch meeting, it is taken for granted, suffices to meet all the problems met at work and at home and when out canvassing.

Learning from Experience

Practical experience has no value unless one learns from it; the more experience the Communist can get the better working-class leader he or she can become. Now the study of history, especially recent history, is the study of past practice. The growth of our factory branches would be quicker, the work of our comrades, new and old, in industry would be more effective if they knew more about the work of Communists in the factories in the 1930's. For it was the work of Communists at the shop floor level and in rank and file movements, which in those years began to reverse the decline in trade union membership. Many mistakes were made, many battles lost, but there were many triumphs too, and it was because of the way they worked in those years that Communists were later elected to leading trade union positions. It is difficult seriously to maintain that, because these years are "dead and gone", the experience gained then is of "no use" to us today, for many of the same problems remain to be solved. Indeed as long as capitalist society survives similar problems will keep recurring to face new groups of Communist workers.

Much the same is true of the peace movement. Some at least of the more extreme reactions of the last few years might have been mitigated if progressive people had more carefully studied the Peace movements of the years before 1939. The kind of views which one heard a few years ago—on the one hand C.N.D. and the Committee of 100 described as *the only* effective peace movements deserving 100 per cent total loyalty, on the other hand the whole movement brushed away as an irresponsible diversion and almost as sabotage of the genuine peace movement—views like these were not only politically unsound, but already proven so by experience. For in the 1930's many similar problems of principle and of tactics arose in the peace movements, problems of the relationships between Communist and non-Communist organisations working for the same ultimate aims but with emphasis on different means. It should not be necessary for a scientific, revolutionary party, which the Communist party claims to be, to repeat its mistakes. A proper study of history can be a school of practical experience and a tool to make construction easier and more efficient. We should learn from our own and from our predecessors' mistakes and be fired by their example.

"That's all very well, but how do we study *this kind of* history?" There are a few books: Allen Hutt's admirable *History of British Trade Unionism* is available in a new and up-to-date edition, but most of the books on working-class history are about earlier periods. A useful *Select Bibliography of the History of the British Labour Movement* 1760-1939 (1s. 6d.) can be obtained from the C.P. History Group. But it is true that most published work is on earlier periods; of course all history has much to teach us; but there is no doubt that we need to know more about the history of the last thirty or forty years than we can find out from books. This is even more important since, as our Communist Party grows, a smaller and smaller percentage of the membership have any political experience of the years before 1939, or even of the war years.

"Ordinary People" and History

Now it happens that history is one of the academic subjects in which recent developments have been, in a sense, progressive rather than reactionary. The trend in most sciences and academic subjects, in the capitalist world, has been towards increasing specialisation and the growing exclusion of the amateur. This contrasts with the needs of a developing Communist society, as expressed in the Program-

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me of the C.P.S.U. where again and again the emphasis is put on "the all-round, harmonious development of the individual . . . as less and less time is spent on material production, the individual is afforded ever greater opportunities to develop his abilities, gifts, and talents in the fields of production, science, engineering, literature, and the arts." A great deal of time is spent by cultural "experts" in bemoaning the cultural passivity of the TV age in Britain and the development of the "admass" mind. Too little attention is given by Socialists to the forms which the healthy reaction of normal people takes. There has been in the last decade a great growth in popular interest in archaeology and local history. Much of this is no longer the antiquarian, jackdaw fact-collecting of the past, but reflects a real desire to understand the past, a determination to learn for oneself, and a wish for practical experience in excavation and research methods. It has become abundantly clear that "ordinary people", non-specialists can study and write local history.

There is no question but that in many towns in Britain there are people in the Communist Party or close to it, who could uncover the recent history of their neighbourhood. "The Communist Party has a national History Group; they are experts, why can't they do this kind of work for us? We are busy and will only make a mess of it anyway." A stream cannot rise higher than its source: the C.P. History Group has some fifty members in the whole country; few of them are "professionals", and of these very few are professionally engaged in studying modern history, never mind working-class history. It is probable that an "amateur" who lives in and knows a town will make a better study of its recent working-class history than would an expert on ancient history brought in from outside, even if, which is most unlikely, such an "expert" could be obtained. We need a great many "local" histories of key moments in the last half-century; they will not be produced unless local people undertake them.

Local History

Two points cannot be overstressed: a small group of people without experience, but willing and interested, can produce a remarkable amount of important historical material in a few years steady and systematic work, without devoting every spare moment to it; such material can be used in innumerable ways, it will not be wasted. Many trades councils and co-operative societies have supported various types of festivals of labour, in which the colourful presentation of local historical material has played a large part. It is no accident that most reports of Wellingborough Trades Council's own festival activities, which preceded the visit of Centre 42, stressed the value and interest of the historical material displayed. Many local newspapers are only too anxious to get material for a column on local history; intelligent descriptive writing of past events without too obvious underlining of their significance may make articles acceptable to a local editor and provide valuable educational material for the local Labour movement. It is quite possible to publish a local history in pamphlet form—duplicated, in photolitho, or printed—and to sell it profitably. The local history you unearth may make a colourful article for *Comment* or even for *Marxism Today*, if you consult the editors. The C.P. History Group publishes a twenty-page, quarterly, duplicated journal, *Our History*. Each issue (9,000 words) is devoted to a single historical theme. Many of the best have in fact been studies in local working-class history [e.g. No. 18, *Sheffield Shop Stewards 1916-18*; No. 19, *An S.D.F. Branch* 1903-6 (Hackney—Kingsland—Dalston); No. 22, *The General Strike in the North-East;* No. 23, *Passages from a Worker's Life 1916-26* (Bob Davies of St. Helens), and No. 24, *The Lancashire Cotton "Famine" 1861-65*]. It has been possible in certain cases to arrange for the production of additional copies for local sales. *Our History* is always interested in new material and provides a continuing vehicle for publication of any worth-while local discoveries. All these ways of "publishing" local histories have been successfully tried in one or more parts of Britain since 1945; they could all be tried in many more places. Outstanding is the recently published book by Nellie Connole, *Leaven of Life;* this is the story of George Fletcher (1897-1958) of Sheffield and almost a history of the Communist Party in that city.

Themes

Constantly people "turn-up" doing just this kind of work and of whom the C.P. History Group has not heard. If only the many interested Party members, industrial workers, students, and school teachers, would take the trouble to get in touch with the History Group, the quantity and quality of historical material we could make available to the working-class movement could enormously increase. But even where an individual or group of comrades prefer to work on their own, a great deal can be achieved. What is important is to have a definite aim in view and to learn how, and where, to pursue it.

One could suggest innumerable historical topics which could and should be studied in most areas of the country, but only local knowledge can determine which will be the most profitable to pursue in a particular area. Some examples may be given: the Shop Stewards' struggle in the 1914-18 war, the foundation and early years of the C.P. in the

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area, the General Strike, the local movements of the unemployed, peace and anti-war movements: in a rather different category, but invaluable for present day practice, would be a study of local left movements in the Labour Party, of past attempts to build unity, of past bans and proscriptions and actions against them. A national, rather than a local theme, but one which should soon be tackled is a history of the student movement in the 1930's. Such a history would provide the youth movement of today, and the students in particular, with a wealth of experience and inspiration. There are themes in plenty; many, of course, overlap, but it is important to focus one's enquiries on a particular theme. If relevant material for other themes turns up, this can be turned to at a later stage. If one allows oneself to be distracted by each tit-bit that floats to the surface, one will end up as a kind of working-class antiquarian, with stories to beguile the winter evenings, but without history to help and inspire comrades in today's and tomorrow's struggles.

Looking for Information

The theme chosen, one has to look for information; indeed one should not finally decide the theme until one has made at least a preliminary investigation of the sources of information. It is no good spending months investigating a most important subject and finding no evidence about it, much better to begin with a less important topic for which historical material is reasonably plentiful. There are three main types of sources, from which most of the information you need will come: the files of the local newspaper(s), the records of local working-class organisations, and the memory of those who took part in past struggles. Each of these sources needs to be used, and some people will find one kind easier to use than another.

Files of past issues of local newspapers may be found in local newspaper offices, public libraries or the county record office, and nationally in the British Museum's library at Colindale. Sometimes the local library or museum has a scrapbook of cuttings, which may save a lot of time. To use a local newspaper quickly, learn its lay-out first, find which pages are likely to have the kind of news you want. Don't forget that advertisements may tell of the activity of local organisations and give information about local economic conditions, though the "cost of loving bonus" in a Cambridge newspaper advertisement was, unfortunately, a misprint! It takes an enormous amount of time to work through complete files of a local paper. So, before you begin, decide from other sources the dates of events you want to find out about.

The Records of Working-Class Organisations

Frank Jackson has collected, at 16 King Street, a splendid library of Communist Party pamphlets and leaflets, and of prints and photographs of incidents in the history of the whole democratic and working class movement in Britain. But there are surprising gaps. Every copy of an old pamphlet or leaflet is worth preserving; there is a particular gap in the national collection for the years 1928-9 to 1932-3. Local pamphlets and leaflets (printed and duplicated), produced by the Communist Party and all working class organisations, tend to disappear very quickly. Copies should be kept and filed; copies of old pamphlets can be offered to Frank Jackson or, if necessary, deposited in a local library or record office on loan. Many old militants, not merely those now in the Communist party, have useful collections of old pamphlets which they will often give away if they know they are going to be preserved. The working-class historian has to assume the responsibility for preserving historical source material as well as for studying it. A particularly worthwhile job is to make a collection of photographs (and cartoons) of past working class struggles in an area. Some may have appeared in local papers, but others can be found in private hands. Where are the photographs of local activity in the General Strike, Hunger Marches, Spain and Second Front campaigns? Some local collections already exist—information about these is always welcome.

Absolutely essential are the minute books, accounts, etc. of local working class organisations (Labour Party, Co-op Guilds, Trades Council, Trade Union districts and branches). Getting access to these records is a matter of showing that you are really seriously interested and sympathetic, of making personal contacts and of exercising tact. Individual retired workers often still possess many of these documents, files of correspondence, copies of leaflets, diaries and even minute books. Patient personal contacts can bring a big reward. Trade Union records can be of very great importance to the writing of the history of the labour movement; that is, periodic reports and documents—annual reports, monthly or quarterly circulars, balance-sheets, union journals, minutes, rule-books, office correspondence, and membership cards, leaflets and so on. These are, on the whole, scarce documents, at least in complete collections. Most unions keep a set of the editions of rule-books and of the bound volumes of their reports, perhaps old minute books, but little else. Nobody knows much what the union districts or branches keep for enquiries from head offices are not always adequately answered. There are collections of Trade Union material in most leading local libraries—though very little in the local record offices—and in the

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great specialised collections at the British Museum, London School of Economics, Cole's collection at Nuffield College, Oxford, the Goldsmith's Library and so on. But for many unions, especially those no longer in independent existence, it is far from easy to discover a complete set of reports, even by hunting through various offices and libraries. This underlines the responsibility we have for preserving the records.

Collecting Material

The first thing to do, if you happen to know of historic records in your union head office or district office, or branch (perhaps in the possession of former officials?), is to try to see them and make a rough inventory. Historic records need not be in manuscript or typescript. Most union material even for early periods is in print, as printing costs were very low in the nineteenth century. You must then make up your mind whether this material would be better off in some public collection, where it could be properly looked after. The county record office or local library will no doubt be pleased to take care of even quite small collections. They need not be given; they can be lent. Larger collections might be better off in one of the places which already have important collections of union material, mentioned above. The History Group will willingly advise anyone who is not sure what is the best thing to do.

It is also advisable to discover from your branch or district how long they keep current material (e.g. correspondence) before throwing it away; sooner or later it will in turn become historic material, and perhaps some arrangement to preserve it can be made. Libraries will always agree to keep such material and not to make it available to the researcher, without permission from the union or branch, for so and so many years.

Among such material it is wise not to overlook anything. For instance, the letterheads, emblems, membership cards of unions are extremely interesting: it might well be worth someone's while to make a collection of all those in a particular city. People write books about tradesmen's shop signs and posters, why not about the pictorial side of union life?

It may be possible to get the local Trades Council to initiate a local survey of union records. It is always simpler for someone to go along and have a look at the material than to rely on reports from branch or district officials, who will generally have neither time nor inclination to grub among old papers.

What can be done with trade union records is well illustrated by S. Pollard's *A History of Labour in Sheffield* in which the records of a variety of local unions have been used very profitably. The chief point to remember is, that union records throw light not only on the actual history of the union, including its great struggles, but on all kinds of aspects of working class life: on wages and unemployment, on general conditions of work, on education (compare the handwritings in early and later minute books). For instance, they often contain biographical records of officials and members, which are very valuable, for we know too little about the actual life-histories and careers of workers in the past. It might well be worth while for someone to go through their union journal in search of such brief life-histories.

Old People's Memories

It is vitally important to record, before it is too late, the experience of people still living who were active in the S.D.F. and B.S.P., or who were Shop Stewards and militant I.L.P.ers before 1920, or who were foundation members of the Communist Party, or who played an active local part in the General Strike or Hunger Marches. Not all of these people are still left-wing, but, if you get them talking, they will often begin to relive their militant experiences from within and so tell you how they felt and what they experienced at the time.

In recording such experiences a borrowed tape recorder or ability to use shorthand is invaluable, but, if you cannot manage either of these, make sure that you write out as fully as you can *all* you heard *immediately* after an interview. Some Y.C.L.ers and young comrades, if shown what to do, find talking to former militant workers interesting and rewarding. Almost all older comrades are glad to recall their experiences for the record, but it is not always an easy thing to record them. The best way to start is by discussing the past generally, reminiscing about various aspects; then all sorts of information begins to come to light and the most important can be followed up in detail.

When you have recorded what you have heard, check it from written records and from other people's reminiscences. Remember human memory is extraordinarily fallible; people tend to see the past through rosy spectacles, to telescope together different events, to think they actually did what they would have liked to have done. After you have checked your notes from different sources, try to go back with specific questions, to check the accuracy of details, in order to eliminate the contradictions between different accounts, but remember that some of these may be due to real differences, at the time, differences of experience and of ideological viewpoint.

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Writing-up

It may seem strange but the most difficult part of the whole enterprise, for the inexperienced, is not the finding out—that is only a matter of time and therefore of persistence—but the writing up. This is where collective experience is of the greatest use and why it is important that the C.P.'s History Group should be in touch with everyone interested and actively engaged in studying working-class history.

As Marxists we see the working class movement and its struggles as something which arises from the production relations, so some brief background of local economic conditions and class relationships is necessary. Local business firms, when defunct, have sometimes left records to local record offices or libraries. These and, failing them, reports in local newspapers of local business activity and business men's associations, local government records and records of local political and religious organisations can give background material important for a proper understanding of local class struggles.

The working class movement is described in most Labour histories as though it were something on its own, isolated from the rest of the community. We need to show how each movement of the working class affected society at large. The working class are the prime movers in capitalist society, and this can be made clear if the impact of local class struggles on the local community is properly described.

Shakespeare in Love

Victor Kiernan

QUEEN Elizabeth is supposed to have wanted to see Falstaff in love. In the Sonnets we see Shakespeare in love, and the spectacle is not always a more edifying one. It may not, on the other hand, be quite so incomprehensible as it has often been made to look. In the essay that follows there will not be much space for quotation, and the reader is asked to have a copy of the poems beside him and keep referring to it. We all need careful watching when we begin to talk about Shakespeare's private life, because the impulse to put his cards on the table for him, and hide a few cards in his sleeve, is nearly irresistible. One proof after all of Shakespeare being the greatest of all writers is that he has the greatest nonsense written about him.

The Sonnets

How many sonnets Shakespeare wrote, nobody knows; the number surviving is 154. Of these the number explicitly or by clear presumption addressed to, or concerned with, a man is no more than thirty-three. This includes all the first seventeen, which have a common theme; among the remaining 137 therefore the figure is only sixteen (counting No. 144, which concerns both a man and woman). There is no reason to assume that all the thirty-three were written to the same man. The number addressed explicitly, or by circumstantial evidence, to a woman, is still smaller: only twenty (again counting No. 144). Of these, nineteen occur among the last twenty-seven sonnets, and most though not necessarily all seem to relate to the same woman. There are six sonnets confined, like No. 129, to general reflections on life. This leaves no fewer than ninety-six sonnets devoted to someone who may have been either a man or a woman, but is very much more likely to have been a dozen different men and women. English is one of the rare languages that permit such an ambiguity; a fact that Shakespeare may have taken deliberate advantage of.

On the traditional view, all or practically all the sonnets were addressed to or inspired by two individuals, the Fair Man and the Dark Lady who appear together in No. 144 as a good and bad angel struggling for Shakespeare's soul. That every probability is against this theory has been doggedly ignored. Sonnet 144 is a sour piece of satire, not a spiritual last will and testament. It is excessively unlikely on the face of it that a man like Shakespeare should have gone for ten or fifteen years without finding more than one man and one woman to write verses about. (It is conceivable but unlikely that the publisher of 1609 only tried to collect two sets, out of a larger number composed.) As to the woman, if we knew hardly anything more of Burns or Byron than what can be read in their works, and if their verses contained no names, we might labour under the delusion that each of them was inspired to love-poetry by one woman only. As to the solitary man in Shakespeare's life, a great deal of energy has been expended on the question of who he was. Arguments for the two favourites, the Earl of Southampton and the Earl of Pembroke, are about equally strong, or weak. Both did have connections with Shakespeare of one kind or another.

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There is no reason why he may not have versified both of them, and many besides. What is quite incredible is that all the sonnets not addressed to a Dark Lady were addressed to any one man. Such an individual would have to be like one of those composite animals that children produce by taking turns to draw a horse's tail, a pig's snout, and so on, on a sheet of paper folded over and over.

Aristocratic Hobby

Sonnet-writing was, by contrast with play-writing, an aristocratic hobby, and like any dilettante mode it was apt to put fantasy well above reality. Love-making, in a languidly gushing style, was its main concern. It is part of every genteel pose to be elegantly unoccupied with the practical matters that occupy plebeians; a gentleman may attend dog-shows, as Veblen remarked, because poodles and spaniels serve no useful purpose. Shakespeare was partly imitating a vogue, partly forcing new wine into an old bottle, the new wine of middle-class thinking and feeling. As a sonnet-writer he progressed from courtly insipidity towards something for which social realism may be as good a name as any. It was the same journey that he was making in his plays, and echoes and affinities between the two series are numerous.

Besides being fashionable in the 1590's, the sonnet-form must have attracted Shakespeare as it has attracted other poets by its technical challenge. His inspiration was exuberant, torrential, volcanic: the sonnet is a miniature, strictly confined and disciplined. What he had to express was not always well suited to it. He may sometimes have started with an overflow of ideas from a play he was writing, and crammed them together without too much regard for logical connection; which would account for a frequent elusiveness of meaning. Often he seems to have started with a single fine idea or phrase that flashed across his mind, and then to have padded it out with routine stuff to make up fourteen lines. No. 53 has two hauntingly beautiful opening lines, the rest is competent craftsmanship. No. 14 consists of a brilliant octet followed by a nothing-meaning sestet. Not seldom, as here, it is the featureless individual apostrophised who supplies the padding. Altogether there appear to me to be twenty-seven sonnets where the beginning is considerably better than the ending, and only one (No. 125) where the opposite is the case.

The importance of distinguishing between more and less inspired sonnets, or sections of them, lies in what this can tell us about how much real feeling went into each. Too commonly the best and the worst have been taken all alike as legal tender of criticism, equally illuminating about their author's emotional state. When we pay attention to how he is saying things, as well as to what things he says, we realise that a great deal of the poetical wealth, and consequently of the emotional intensity, has no connection at all with his nominal subjects. "I never found so many beauties in the sonnets," Keats wrote while studying them in 1817: " . . . they seem to be full of fine things said unintentionally." In many cases it is these "unintentional" things that make themselves the real subject; particularly in earlier sonnets where Shakespeare is not emancipated from conventional mannerisms. Or perhaps Keats ought rather to have said that his real "intention" was often different from his ostensible one.

Every reader will have his own estimate as to which are the superlative sonnets, and how many are by comparison flat or laboured. My own reckoning for what it is worth is that thirty-three of the 154 pieces belong to the highest class, fifty-nine others are good or excellent, fifty-one more or less feeble, while eleven are too uneven in quality to be put in any of these three classes. The great ones are scattered through the collection, taking it in the order in which we have it, an order that can be only very approximately correct; they tend however to come in clusters, and to relate to a number of special themes. Of the thirty-three sonnets more or less distinctly addressed to a man or men, only one belongs to my highest class (No. 14, admitted in spite of its unevenness); fifteen to the second class. Of the twenty poems to a woman or women, three seem to me to fall into the highest class (Nos. 130, 138, 141), six into the second. Only four of the thirty-three best can confidently be thought of as dedicated to someone resembling the Patron of Shakespeare legend: Nos. 33, 57, 58, 124; and of these only Nos. 57 and 58 may really be about the same man.

Patrons and Patronage

Among these greatest sonnets there is a progression from themes of a generalised character towards others growing directly and intensely out of conflicts in Shakespeare's personal experience. Time, mutability, decay, come into thirty-one sonnets, twenty-two of them in the first half. They have been topics of poetry in all ages, and poems like Nos. 64 and 65 lament a curse that men share with trees and stars and that no law, no king can alter. Poems like Nos. 109-112 are utterances of one man about his own fate among men. It is the same kind of irruption that Beethoven brought into music, romantic self-assertion in place of classical detachment. Conservatives very likely found Shakespeare's forcible, and at last violent, confrontation of individual with human environment equally vulgar and presumptuous.

Like Beethoven's in Vienna, his professional and social position in London was not an easy one. It

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involved indignities that must have been the harder to bear because his family had been of some standing in its own town before it came down in the world. An actor's life, then and for long afterwards, was the gipsy-like existence that Hazlitt was to depict, one of hardships, distractions, excitements, fugitive triumphs. Shakespeare was drawn to the theatre more as writer than as actor. There was a choice between the rewards it had to offer, and those of a literary man working for the press and for private patronage. Instinct, as artist and man, drew him in the long run decisively towards the theatre. It was more plebeian, less genteel; it could be degrading, and we can understand the complaint in Sonnet 111 about "public means which public manners breeds". All the same his trade was more wholesome, less inwardly and deeply degrading, than dependence on private favour. It belonged to the epoch of market competition now opening, harsh but liberating; patronage was part of the feudal-aristocratic order of society now in its decline.

Disenchantment

Theatrical companies like the one Shakespeare was a member of could not yet do without highly placed protectors. It may be that a good many of his poems of compliment were addressed to such personages. As a writer he needed a patron or patrons in a more particular way. Patronage was to be had in London, on its own terms. The Elizabethan nobleman was exchanging his old feudal household in the countryside for a new kind of miniature court in the capital, and surrounding himself with clients and dependents of a new sort. A literary man or two would find a ready place among them, and tributes in verse to the great man would be as much a part of his pomp and show as the gaudy suits of clothes supplied by his tailor. Glorification of those in power was the social function of Renaissance arts in general. A poet and a painter are among the wealthy Timon's parasites. Elizabeth set an example of wanting flattery laid on with a trowel by her writers, Shakespeare among them; elsewhere in high society he met with the same greed for it, and more than once sounds chilled by the demands on him for admiration: e.g. in Sonnets 85 and 103, or in No. 84 where he hints at some insatiable person being too "fond on praise". Many passages in the plays testify to his hatred of flattery, and it must have deepened this hatred that he had been compelled to play the flatterer himself.

For him to become one of this guild of rhyming satellites in his younger days was natural enough. It was necessary for him, also, as a keen observer of politics, to have some kind of entrée to the circles of the high-born, if he was to succeed in exploring and turning into drama the world he lived in. In any society with a ruling aristocracy we must expect to find much of its essential experiences, motives, workings, concentrated here, more fully for good or evil than in any other class. If Shakespeare came to be fascinated by some individuals in it, the attraction was of aristocracy, of the class and its culture, at least as much as of particular members. He was entering a brave new world, at first with some of Miranda's naive enthusiasm for its denizens. Conversely the disillusionment that he evidently experienced cannot have been limited to the individuals he had attached himself to, but must have roused his distrust of the whole class and all it represented. Here must lie in part the cause of that creeping disenchantment with Court and nobility, that imprint of ruling-class demoralisation, so visible in the plays, first in the Histories and then, more profoundly, in the Tragedies.

The fallacy of much speculation about the Sonnets has been to fasten one-sidedly and exaggeratedly on the personal feelings that developed between Shakespeare and some he came in contact with, and to detach them from the complex of social attitudes and reflexes they must have been embedded in. All through modern times the West has been drifting further out of touch with the kind of social pattern that prevailed in Shakespeare's day and conditioned all private relationships within it. It is helpful to keep at the back of one's mind countries of today, India or Pakistan for instance, where a semi-feudal order of similar type is still in being, or only just passing away.

What is Love?

Some light on how the Sonnets ought to be read may be gained from the first seventeen, which form the most recognisably coherent sequence, as well as the longest, in the collection. Their unity consists in their all being appeals to a handsome young man, apparently of high station, to get married in order to be able to bequeath to the world children as good-looking as himself. There could not be a much less promising topic for the greatest of poets to exercise his talent on; it is the sort of subject that might have been prescribed for an Oxford prize-poem, or an examination essay in old China. That all the seventeen pieces were addressed to the same person is mere assumption; there is no reason why Shakespeare should not have composed variations on the same tune for several young men of good birth and looks. There is no internal evidence even to prove that they were all about men; some might have been presented to a young lady, to tickle her or oblige relatives who wanted to persuade her to marry. Viola in *Twelfth Night* uses the same

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argument when pleading with Olivia to marry the Duke.

To our minds of course (we have our own prejudices and irrationalities) a woman would be a far more suitable recipient of these fulsome tributes; but it was an age when masculine looks, dress and deportment were as carefully studied as feminine. There is, however, in favour of traditional views about the Sonnets, the further fact that Shakespeare several times in these first ones, and repeatedly in later ones, speaks in terms of "love" between himself and the person addressed. This, it has been held, shows him infatuated with the charms of some young man. Why such an infatuation should express itself in fourteen poems urging the young man to marry and found a family, is something that has never been explained, and has been a stumbling-block even to the most loyal adherents of the theory. It borders on the ludicrous when we find Shakespeare in No. 6 pressing his idol to have *ten* children. This is a third-rate poem, but so are eight others in the set.

We of today love God, women, our country, and ice-cream, and in parts of the north of England everybody calls everybody "love". Then as now the term was a very indiscriminate one; with more excuse, because Shakespeare's generation was stirring with many new currents of feeling, and new forms of relationship, not yet explored and classified. When Shakespeare talks of a lover he means as often as not a warm friend—but there are many degrees of warmth on any thermometer. In Sonnet 32 he calls himself "lover" and "friend" in the same breath. Brutus and Cassius are "lovers". When Othello is about to kill his wife she exclaims that she

> never loved Cassio
> But with such general warranty of heaven
> As I might love.

If we could call Shakespeare up and examine him about his love for a "fair youth", he might plead the same general warranty.

It may be remarked also that his numerous and tedious eulogies of good looks, in later sonnets as well as in the first seventeen, are habitually very bloodless. They are too insipid, or too flowery, to sound indelicate. His particulars never descend further than bright eyes and rosy cheeks; so free are these poems from any corporeal detail that many of them could have been presented to a woman as suitably as to a man. It is well within permissible conjecture that Shakespeare had a patroness as well as patrons, some blue-stocking Lady Bountiful it may be; or that he found it politic to offer fourteen lines of flapdoodle now and then to a grandee's wife or daughter. Desdemona was not above asking her husband's officer Iago what praises he could compose in her honour. To women, at least to blue-blooded dames, these tributes would be no more than normal hyperbole. Shakespeare may have praised good looks when he could find nothing else to praise; if we care to carry guesswork further, he may have left out any recognisable allusions to the looks of individuals in order to be able to bestow the same garlands on several prospective patrons—or prospective lady-friends, in the style of Falstaff at Windsor. Artists are at least as artful as other men. Be all this as it may, Shakespeare went on churning out his compliments like a barrel-organ, perfectly free so far as can be seen from any sense of impropriety.

Most of the first seventeen Sonnets, No. 1, for example, show no trace of personal involvement; as regards their nominal subject they are literary exercises pure and simple. It is even conceivable that the youth who is being sermonised never had any existence except in Shakespeare's imagination. But these poems contain, amid much twaddle, a good deal of fine poetry, written one cannot but believe to ease Shakespeare of some of

> that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart.

They had, therefore, sources of inspiration quite apart from their pretended one.

Growing Old

A potent source was, palpably, his sense, prominent in many later Sonnets too (altogether in thirty-one), of the passage of time, the coming on of age, the impermanence of all things. If he kept warning his reader of wrinkles and decrepitude inevitably to come, it was because he himself was painfully conscious of having already left behind the springtime of his life. To assume the accents of old age and debility was one of the affectations of sonneteering, it is true. It may have had something to do with the fact that the whole late-feudal society of the sonneteers was growing old and worn out, along with its presiding officer Queen Elizabeth. But Shakespeare was not merely adopting an attitude. He was deeply and morbidly preoccupied with the transience of his own being and of everything about him; by temperament no doubt, and also because men's awareness of Time as a corrosive is heightened when the institutions and beliefs they have been born with are crumbling. He was in his fourth decade when many of his sonnets must have been written, a stage of life when a man of those days could seriously feel that he was growing old. The "forty winters" he threatened his hearer with in No. 2 were closing in on him already.

Under the guise of mourner for a young friend's coming loss of youth—and sometimes without any disguise—he was mourning his own youth, already lost. And under pretence of regretting that the stripling's good looks should leave no copy of

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themselves, he was surely wondering how much was destined to survive of his own work. He belonged to a section of the business community then rapidly growing to maturity in England. Sonnet 4, and many others, abound in commercial imagery, and the whole of this first sequence breathes the middle-class doctrine, sanctified by Puritanism, of work, activity, productiveness. The person addressed, real or half-real or imaginary, typifies with his "unthrifty loveliness" (No. 4) the opposite quality of idle, spendthrift gentility. On the surface the whole argument is about his neglect to produce children—with a note of preposterous exaggeration when Sonnet 9 talks of the world being left desolate if he dies childless. But if Shakespeare had died without writing his later plays, the world really would have been left, if not desolate, much poorer than we know it. Money wasted simply changes pockets, he says here: "beauty's waste" is irredeemable. So overwhelming, both in these and in later sonnets (e.g. No. 115), was his sense of the power and malignancy of Time, that we may set his whole life-work beside it, and ask whether this was not his attempt to dam the all-destroying torrent; to build something stronger, as he boasts in No. 55 of having done, than marble or the gilded monuments of princes, something that will last till doomsday.

In these opening sonnets it is the poet himself who "among the wastes of time must go" (No. 12), and consoles himself with the thought that he has in his own creations a defence against Time's scythe. It is his poetry that is "Time's best jewel", in No. 65, a wonderful elegy on "sad mortality" where love is brought in much as a stage-property in the closing couplet. His reflections are as completely pagan as Horace's. The consolations of religion console him not at all; his thoughts are not of survival in heaven but of survival on earth, among his fellow-men, in human memory.

The artist's longing for immortality for his works, and for himself through them, is a very old and ingrained one; it came out very strongly in the men of the Renaissance, and it would be strange if it had not been strong in Shakespeare too. Over and over again in the Sonnets he promises to immortalise someone by singing his praises in immortal verse. Those on whom the honour is conferred appear always to be social superiors; against the advantage of rank he throws into the balance the weight of an immeasurable genius. But what perpetuates the memory of a poet's subject perpetuates his own memory also. An underling in a society dominated by birth instead of merit, Shakespeare had to adopt an imbecile fiction of resting his hope of fame on his success in recording for posterity the blooming features of a young gentleman; as though Napoleon were to rest his glory upon his gardening operations at St. Helena. He had to pretend to think that an output of children by this juvenile would be a stronger defiance of the "bloody tyrant Time" than his own "barren rhyme" (No. 16). The real meaning is the exact opposite: the youth's name will live, if it does live, because the author of Shakespeare's works has written about him.

Plebeian and Aristocrat

A good many of the later sonnets are as artificial as the first group, and some are devoid of genuine feeling about anything. One handful of poems of mechanical compliment is the set concerned with a journey, and separation, remarkably poor treatment of one of poetry's perpetual themes. These are too flat to be fictitious; Shakespeare's muse "plods dully on", like his horse in No. 50, obviously working to order. But both here, and in many other pieces where more authentic emotion is displayed, we can reconstruct hypothetical situations that may have prompted them, far more natural and appropriate than the alleged passion for a fair youth. (A few, such as the incomparable No. 107, seem to defy interpretation on any lines.) Notwithstanding all this, it is reasonable, though not quite obligatory, to believe that Shakespeare did undergo some emotional entanglement, which grew painful and ended for him in bitter disappointment, with some sprig of the nobility. But whatever the personal attraction between them was, whether mutual or one-sided, the social realities of the situation between them must have counted for at least as much. It was a relationship between a brilliant plebeian and an aristocrat who, if we give him the benefit of the doubt, may not have been quite a cipher otherwise, but was an aristocrat first and foremost.

Shakespeare tried more than once to convince himself that his young man was endowed with moral virtues as well as with beauty. Beauty as by itself a proof of goodness was an idea that can be found beguiling him in the plays too. His talk of his patron's virtue may remind us, however, of some of Falstaff's reminiscences about high life and its moral standards. "I was as virtuously given as a gentleman needs to be; virtuous enough; swore little; diced not above seven times a week; went to a bawdy-house not above once in a quarter of an hour." Shakespeare was soon pained to observe, and to see that others were observing, how little of a model young man his friend was, and began to expostulate, as in No. 69. Nos. 95 and 96 are graver reprimands. But in other sonnets Shakespeare is harassed by thoughts of inequality between them, the difficulty for a man of position to associate with him openly. In No. 49 he seems to forecast a day when his friend will have dropped Bohemian habits

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and will discover "reasons of settled gravity" for dropping their acquaintance. Shakespeare wanted the youth he admired to be a respectable man, but a respectable man of his status could not be the intimate of a low comedian.

In four sonnets that come close together (35, 40-42) he brings a more special charge against his friend—of making free with his mistress. None of these is a great or intense poem. He was hurt by his associate treating him so cavalierly, and very likely making a good joke of the affair among their circle. Shakespeare made up his mind to shrug it off; and the young man's patrician ease and casual freedom from moral inhibitions clearly had a charm for the middle-class poet, even though the poet's better self might struggle against it. "Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows . . ." (No. 40).

Complaint and Reproach

There is another group in which Shakespeare seems to complain of some positive injury or slight. First come the fine pair, Nos. 33 and 34, where he bewails false hopes that have deceived him like a bright morning over-clouded; he welcomes the regrets of the person who has wronged him, but adds bitterly that they do nothing to remove the "loss" and "disgrace" he has suffered. This affair may be the same as that of the stolen mistress: the rhyme of "loss" and "cross" occurs in both No. 34 and No. 42, and may link them—though there may be no connection: a completely different occasion for Nos. 33 and 34 can be imagined. "Disgrace", if there is a connection, must imply some scandal he was exposed to by his friend's levity. Or some more serious injury may be referred to, a failure perhaps to fulfil a promise of help to Shakespeare in his public life. After all the first duty of a patron is to patronise, and there is no indication anywhere of the poet having anything to thank this one for. Even in his half-disreputable profession he cannot always have been scoring successes. Actors and writers, still more than the royal favourites of Sonnet 25, were liable to die at a frown. He had rivals, and doubtless envious detractors and hostile critics. He was certainly not posing when he wrote in No. 29 of being "in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes", an "outcast" cruelly in need of encouragement and aid.

All this should be kept in mind when the two really moving sonnets of reproach, 57 and 58, are read. In each of them Shakespeare calls himself a "slave" (twice in No. 57), and in the first a "servant", in the second a "vassal"; he writes in a style of the most abject self-abasement, painful to read. We can find an escape if we wish by supposing the poems to be to a woman, the cruel mistress of poetical tradition. To abase oneself before such a "sovereign" would be quite in order, even at a much later date. But the impression left on the mind of a man, a grandee surrounded by his petty court of hangers-on like Malvolio in his pipe-dream of grandeur, and busy with his little press of important affairs, while the poet cools his heels in an ante-room or is put off with more or less civil excuses, is remarkably strong. In this setting the language of humility was as much an accepted idiom as in love-poetry. It was there that forms of address took shape such as we see lingering long afterwards, fossilised by habit, when a Duke of Wellington signs his dismissal of some poor widow's petition as her "most faithful, most obedient humble servant". In a society of feudal complexion the distinction between any other sort of dependant or inferior, and a body-servant, is always hazy. Louis XIV had peers and princes to hand him his shirt of a morning.

Man of a New Age

But Shakespeare was a man of, or half of, a new age, with a different set of social axioms and significances; a man of middle-class self-respect whom the old casual treatment must, now and then at any rate, have galled. Above all he was a busy man with a heavy load of work to shoulder, penetrated as all the industrial middle classes were by a conviction of the infinite value of time. Time is the commodity of which feudal society is more wasteful and careless than of any other. It expects the man of letters who seeks its favours to be perpetually in attendance, ready whenever wanted to converse or recite for the great man's entertainment. If Shakespeare watches the clock, and waits, and protests that he has nothing better to do than wait on his patron's whims:

"I have no precious time at all to spend",

we may believe him sincere; but we may also think of the clock in Sonnet 77 that shows how the "precious minutes waste", and suspect an undercurrent of bitter irony. Moods of excessive self-abnegation always tremble on the edge of an opposite mood of heated protest. "Being your vassal bound to stay your leisure"—this was an old-world attitude that Shakespeare could sometimes squeeze himself into, but not one that a man of his epoch and class and temper could go on accepting for ever.

If he lavished flattery on a patron, it was at first in the eagerness and intoxication of being flattered himself, by the notice of an admired young man, some glass of fashion and mould of form. We may read his release from the spell in Sonnet 87—"Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing"—with its image of a man wakening from a blissful dream. It may have been a gradual cooling off, accompanying Shakespeare's growing professional success and independence. If so we may surmise that some of the Sonnets of perfunctory compliment mark his

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drift away from the young man he had idolised. Or their connection may have ended more explosively. A second grand emotional crisis is recorded in the Sonnets; most of the great poems in the later part are concerned with it. Things went wrong with Shakespeare in some way, and he was beset by slander and abuse. Whether his former hero had any place in this we can only speculate. Clearly Shakespeare was desperately in want of a helping hand, and got none from this quarter. There may have been some wounding refusal of aid, some humiliatingly public withdrawal of favour, possibly by way of reprisal for the poet's withdrawal from his former devotion. There may have been something, in short, like the rejection of Falstaff. The Shakespeare who "made himself a motley to the view" (No. 110), at the cost of dignity and conscience, cannot have been blind to some resemblances between himself and Falstaff clowning in taverns for the amusement of a dissolute prince capable of insulting or even striking him.

Crisis

The crisis now engulfing him, as we glimpse it in a dozen sonnets that stand out from all the rest as the Tragedies do from the rest of his plays, involved his social position and reputation, and, more deeply, his inner life. Two groups of poems are concerned. One is filled with a paroxysm of self-reproach, and a passionate reconciliation, or an attempt at it, with someone dear to him whom he has wronged and neglected; the other with self-loathing induced by a degrading love affair, or affairs. Either these two groups were composed far apart, and are unrelated to each other—which is hard to credit—or they have got into the wrong order, and the repentance was the outcome of the self-disgust, and was Shakespeare's redemption or hope of redemption from it.

The group that to all appearance ought to stand first is opened by No. 129. There are not many expressions in poetry of the horror of enslavement to a sexual attraction divorced from love or esteem; this, and some like it here and there in the Tragedies, are among the most vivid. Here as before the spectre of time and decay haunts Shakespeare's mind. In No. 138, a very strikingly "modern" piece of self-dissection, he, an ageing lover, takes comfort in a woman's assurances, though he knows them to be lies, that she considers him young. In No. 141 his gnawing awareness of her faults is set against his inability to resist captivation, in spite of physical nausea at the thought of "base touches" and the "sensual feast". A sense of sin broods over these Sonnets, and breaks out in No. 146. This is one of the most impressive of them all, and the most extraordinary of all because it shows Shakespeare for once in the grip of religious hysteria, in a frame of mind to condemn the body as a sink of corruption and look to a soul separate and emancipated from it. Revulsion against sex, or rather against the corruption of relations between the sexes, has been in all ages one of the taproots of pessimism and religion.

Shakespeare was going through what in an ordinary man of his (or our) day would be a religious crisis. But no negative, anti-human philosophy could take hold of him for long. All his healthier instincts impelled him towards finding a way out of his bottomless pit with human, not celestial aid; a way leading towards reconciliation with a fellow-being instead of with Heaven. As in his struggle against Time and mutability, it was an earthly salvation that he sought.

To His Wife?

Who the fellow-being was is an unanswerable question. It is all Lombard Street to a china orange that it was not the tailor's dummy of the first seventeen sonnets, or the light-hearted libertine of the stolen mistress story. None of the poems in this group have any overt reference to a man; none contain any allusion to the person addressed being of superior station; none to the writer being the older of the two. They may have been written to some old, tried, and deeply valued friend, man or woman, from whom Shakespeare had become estranged. A woman is vastly more probable than a man. She may have been a former lover. She may have been his sister Joan: there is at least the suggestive fact that of all relationships portrayed in his plays the most consistently happy is that between brother and sister. But the human being to whom these sonnets could most naturally be written—the one to whom alone some of their lines *ought* to have been written—was his wife.

Shakespeare's wife was eight years older than him, and in 1596 when the shock of their only son's death may have helped to bring them together she was forty-four. Living quietly at Stratford she may have aged less rapidly than he did in London. In any case these poems have nothing romantic or amatory about them. They are poems that a husband who had really loved and still esteemed his wife might write to her, after being led away into a froth of adventure and excitement that he now bitterly regretted. Whether or not Shakespeare could have expected his wife to read and understand them is a separate question.

It is hard to believe that in years of sonnet-writing, partly spent at Stratford with his kith and kin, Shakespeare found no poetic inspiration in family affections. Not a few of the sonnets can be read in this light, without any straining of probability. No. 48 may be less puzzling if read as a poem to one of his daughters than taken any other way. No. 61

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might be the outcome of a fit of bored impatience at a display of jealousy by his wife. At all events we ought surely not to forget that Shakespeare the playwright grew into an apostle of marriage founded on love and trust, and in his later works laid extraordinary emphasis on chastity and marital fidelity. His ideal of marriage was another close link between him and what was best in the maturing middle class; it was compounded from the workaday virtues of the Reformation and the romanticism of the Renaissance, and represented one of the most dynamically progressive ideas then afloat in Europe.

In No. 109 Shakespeare comes back to his "home of love", declaring himself unchanged at heart by absence and temptation. He was often absent from Stratford, where his wife doubtless heard something of his doings and misdoings in London. He was a celebrity, and plenty of gossips would be ready to supply anecdotes. No. 110 is even finer, and conjures up still more convincingly a man turning back, disillusioned with spurious sensation, to a woman whom he recognises as in spite of everything his truest support. No mere neglect of a friend could possibly call for such an outpouring of remorse; the conclusion, where he begs for the asylum of a "pure and most, most loving breast", is exceedingly hard to connect with a man, however much he might mean to the writer; totally impossible to connect with the Fair Man whom Shakespeare watches sardonically in No. 144 in the process of being seduced by the Dark Lady. No. 112 is an expression of overpowering gratitude for "love and pity" at a time when he is oppressed by "vulgar scandal" of some kind, and an almost Byronic outburst of contempt for the opinions of all the rest of the world—an assertion of his right to be his own judge that is repeated still more violently in No. 121: "No, I am that I am. . . ." No. 117 sounds more than all the others like a peace-offering to an injured wife. In the next he thinks of "ruin'd love" being rebuilt stronger and firmer than ever through the ordeal that has brought him back from the "siren tears", the sexual torments of his late feverish life.

We may recall the ill-used but patient and forgiving wives of some of his final plays—Katharine of Aragon, or Hermione. But it is clear from No. 120 that he did not think all the blame his. He appeals to the "dear friend" for forgiveness on the ground that this friend once painfully wounded him. (There is the same rhyme of "shaken" and "taken" as in No. 116, which may suggest an affinity.) In earlier sonnets we have seen him complaining of various injuries; but how he could have repaid any injury in such a fashion as to make any aristocratic acquaintance endure the same "hell" as he himself had been through, is, once more, very hard to see. It is not at all hard to suppose that his wife may in bygone years have alienated him by some misconduct, real or suspected. Male jealousy is so frequent and so demonic a force in his plays that it would be strange if Shakespeare never stood in need of his own warning against the green-eyed monster.

Judgment on Society

Whether the Dark Lady who helped to plunge him into his abyss was a lady as well as a brunette is unknown; she frequented at all events a demi-monde of easy virtue that the manners of a depraved Court fostered. Whether the former patron came into her story we do not know. The Fair Man of No. 144 is highly unlikely to be him; a frail though well-meaning clergyman would fill the bill better. But disgust with sex is, historically, a symptom of disgust with a society grown obsolete and twisted. If Shakespeare was in a false position on the fringes of high life, that life itself was a false one. His judgment on the social order, his "grand remonstrance", can be read in Sonnet 66, the catalogue of evils and injustices that he had felt himself or seen his fellow-creatures suffer; among them "maiden virtue rudely strumpeted". Hamlet recites a similar litany in "To be or not to be . . .". In the Tragedies Shakespeare was concerned at once with the perversion of government and society, and with the perversion of relations between men and women as one of the maladies of times "out of joint". In these sonnets where he closes a chapter in his life we may perhaps see him turning his back on the London of the high and mighty in the mood of Timon shaking off his feet the dust of Athens, or Lear going out into the storm.

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Discussion contribution on:

Art and Superstructure

Margot Heinemann

I MUST disagree very strongly with the arguments used by David Craig in the June issue of *Marxism Today*, to attack Ernst Fischer's valuable article *Art and Ideological Superstructure* (*Marxism Today*, February 1964), as well as much of the substance of Fischer's book *The Necessity of Art* (Penguin).

I am not concerned to refute Craig's argument line by line—this would make dull and unprofitable reading. But I would ask any reader who takes the discussion seriously to read Fischer's article again—for his argument is not at all what Craig suggests.

To say that art bears no trace or mark of the society which gave birth to it would be stupid, and of course this is not at all what Fischer says. (His comments on the historical background of romantic and modern writers and musicians in *Necessity of Art*, as well as the article under discussion, should surely be enough to prove this). But it is also true that great art survives through many societies and ages because as well as that which is particular to the society in which it originates and transitory, it includes also situations, feelings and myths which express reality in a more lasting aspect, and transcend to some extent the limitations of that particular society. To put it another way, a man is first of all a social human being, and social human beings have a great deal in common in all epochs of recorded history. Hence stories, myths and legends may be shared between classes and even between epochs. (I do not say they always can be.)

Common Human Experiences

Take, for example, the traditional ballads which both David Craig and I love so much. Some of them, as Child's great collection shows, have sources in folk ritual: others in chivalrous romance sung by the minstrels; others in the recent history of the local "big house" and aristocratic families: others in the personal tragedy of a village girl deserted by her lover. The folksong tradition has absorbed them all. Aristocratic myth (the betrayed Roland dying at Roncesvaux, blowing his horn) blends into peasant myth (the betrayed Robin Hood, dying in the abbey, blowing his horn). Many Greek myths have had a long and varied life in a whole series of different societies. Who knows whether the dead girl returning to her lover in *The Unquiet Grave* was a peasant girl or a queen in the first version of the story? *The Douglas Tragedy* is not a fertility myth nor a work myth, nor an image of revolution but the story of two (as it happens) noble lovers. It is the same kind of theme as *Romeo and Juliet* or *West Side Story*, and it is by virtue of the common central situation that it can still speak to us. The study of origins and sources is fascinating and enriches our understanding, but it is not in this that the essential power of art and poetry to move us can be found. If it were, no audience unschooled in Marxist interpretation could respond to Homer or Aeschylus or Shakespeare, whereas all experience shows that much of the human content does come across to the audience without special historical knowledge.

How this happens in practice is well illustrated by the great popularity of Shakespeare—poet of the world in change from feudalism to capitalism—in the socialist countries. The director of the magnificent Soviet film of *Hamlet* told us that, when it became known that he was going to make this film, he received letters expressing pleasure

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and satisfaction from all over the U.S.S.R. The director wrote back asking why each correspondent was so interested in that particular play. He quoted as typical the reply of a young factory worker in Taskhent. "Hamlet was a prince. He could have had everything—money, women, a crown. But he had a conscience: he wanted the truth."

I asked the same director why, when he had to omit so much of the play, he left in almost every line of Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern (minor court flatterers and spies whom most English producers cut severely). He replied: "Ah, I am especially fond of Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern—*I know* so many people like this." For him, in this case "what are transitory are the social character masks". And in the popular version—designed to be shown in the most remote areas as well as the towns, which he finally made, the hero with whom the audience instinctively sympathise is not First Gravedigger, but Hamlet himself. Rightly, I should have thought.

Not so simple

If we followed David Craig's line of approach in this contribution, seeing art exclusively as "class-conditioned" we should be interested only, or mainly, in the art which is directly created by and for the exploited class in the old society; and since this class is necessarily restricted in means of expression, in education and in opportunity to take a leading part in the country, a great deal of art would be excluded from our tradition—even the work of artists who played a consciously progressive role in the history of their times. We should still have Bunyan, Burns and Blake, but not Donne, Sidney, Marvell or Milton—and even Keats seems doubtful. And what would become of Bach and Mozart, who wrote for the small courts of German princes? Or of G. M. Hopkins, a Jesuit and on any reckoning a difficult writer? Or of Balzac, Royalist and snob, from whom Marx said he had learned more than from all the economists? Certainly Burns the farmer wrote with an exquisite ear for the rhythms of speech: but then so (as Craig admits) did Donne, so did Ralegh, Lord Warden of the Stannaries and the monopolist under Elizabeth. So, in modern times, did Yeats, for all his cult of the old aristocratic way of life. The connection between "class-conditioning" and literary quality is not as simple as Craig suggests.

How dangerously narrowing the approach can be is seen in Craig's approving quotation from one of his worker students who had been delighted with Wilfred Owen's poetry ("down-to-earth"), contrasting with it the wretched Keats he had had to read at school ("all that about beauty"). Owen himself, great anti-war poet as he was, loved Keats and learned from him: he did not, as the less sensitive A-level candidates do, classify all poetry at sight into "down-to-earth" and "flowery". Keats' poetry is not something one outgrows in the course of acquiring a true appreciation of the moderns: it gives an aspect of human experience, and any reader will be the richer for appreciating both Keats *and* Owen. It is natural that many workers should come to like *first* poetry with modern imagery and a strong note of disillusionment. But it is no sign of treachery to like other kinds too. Harry Pollitt used to quote Shelley, Byron and William Morris with rousing effect in his speeches, and I do not think he was merely backward, though Dr. Leavis might not have approved.[1]

Accessibility of Art

It is not even true that all great art has been (in Craig's phrase) "accessible to the mass of people and accepted by them": and this for several reasons.

[1] It is a common misconception that while Byron and Shelley were progressive, Keats was "non-political", a follower of pure beauty. Actually he was a conscious Radical at least from the time of his early association with Leigh Hunt, and the virulent attacks of Tory critics on him were largely prompted by this fact, as Hugh Sykes Davies has shown in *The Poets and their Critics.*

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Sept. 1964 - No. 18

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First, in societies where the people have been denied their birthright of culture, only the simpler forms of most arts will be intelligible to all; and many will react with suspicion and hostility to a form more complex than they can deal with. In a socialist society where, for instance, musical training and concert going is more widely available, one would expect a bigger working class audience for Shostakovitch or for Bach than here.

Secondly, in every art there are some artists who are admired by their fellow-artists even more than by the public—which has not yet caught up or perhaps never will.

Many great artists have had to create the taste by which they are appreciated: and this is not always done in their own generation. Not only Picasso and the Cubists, but the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists had to do this. Yet the paintings of Van Gogh, which were considered outrageous and clumsy when they first appeared, are now among the most widely popular pictures. Of course not all innovations survive: many of the modern abstract artists have been "frozen" at a particular stage in their development by the demands of the art-dealing business, and what was at first experiment and revolt against conventional bourgeois standards has itself become a most boring commercial stereotype. Time sorts this out: an art which neither gives pleasure to the many nor to what Walter Allen has called "the impassioned few" will not last.

Modern Art

When it comes to modern art, two points seem to be relevant.

1. Craig holds that certain styles and methods are progressive, others reactionary. He argues that Kafka, admired by Fischer, is reactionary because of his "method or style". He then defines this *style* as "the placeless, timeless nightmare with its quality of neurotic obsession that can never be resolved". But surely this is a question of *content*. Kafka conveys a frightening sense of "man confused and hounded" by authority, but *without* the perspective which a Socialist writer could have given it. It is the *content*, not the use of nightmare, as a means to convey it, that is limited: as Fischer quite rightly points out (Brecht uses nightmare too).[2]

Again, James Joyce's style and method represent a revolt against the traditions not only of literature but of Irish petty bigotry and shopkeepers' nationalism. His work has richness of idiom and keen critical observation, without any conscious revolutionary or Socialist perspective: hence it tends to become static and the experimental development of Irish speech rhythms sometimes sinks into nonsense. But because of Joyce's work Sean O'Casey was able to write his autobiography in the way he did, using much of the same style and method worked out by the older writer.

2. In the consciousness of man in the modern world there are also certain new things, new tensions and problems which could not exist in earlier periods, but which now arise both in the capitalist and the socialist countries. For example, many problems of life in the modern city, with its vast scale, great distances, crowded travel, automation and complex organisation of work, are common to both worlds. The rhythms of jazz, in some ways especially attractive to the city dweller, "catch on" with youth in East as well as West. The power of science for good or evil and the danger of the H-bomb, which could annihilate all that man has created through the ages in the world, is a nightmare which haunts men's minds in both capitalist and socialist countries. (Indeed, it is just this that makes a world wide peace movement possible). Is it surprising that young artists everywhere should be looking for new means to express these experiences? *The H-bomb Thunder* and *We dinna want Polaris* are fine marching songs: does it follow that Britten's *War Requiem*, which is not much like them, is no good?

Picasso, to take another example, worked on the theme of war and peace in innumerable ways.

[2] Notably in *Mahagonny*.

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At one end of the scale his genius gave us the Stockholm peace dove: at the other, *Guernica*. The dove was naturalistic in style, *Guernica* was not. Everyone could understand the dove and respond to the artist's intention. A much smaller audience could respond fully to *Guernica*, but for them it was an intense re-enactment of the horror and a protest against the bestiality of war and Fascism. *Both* paintings are part of the tradition of great art and enrich man's artistic experience. But they reach different audiences, different degrees of sophistication, if you like.

Working people with little formal education, but with a long oral tradition, strong feeling and solidarity, and deep living wisdom, created folk-song and folk-art as we have it. In the past, more elaborate art was usually the work of trained professionals, produced largely for the ruling circles, royal, noble or religious, but with an appeal far beyond those.

Narrowing Sympathy and Appreciation

Today modern productive technique requires increasingly a worker with intellectual training. In the working class movement in capitalist countries, and much more in the working class of socialist countries, we have a growing number of people with considerable education and a wide experience of literature and art (including that created for the old ruling class.) Moreover through modern communications they have, for good or ill, contact and familiarity with life and art in many countries—not only their own locality. They have much in common with the peasants who made the ballads, but they are very different people: as they are also different from the typical white-collar worker in a capitalist society. And so their appreciation and demands of art will be in some degree different too—more complex in method, perhaps, realistic in a different way. How can you lay it down that they are to write like Burns or Bunyan but not like Eluard or Aragon? Or halt their appreciation of music at the simple folk melody, denying them the intricate patterns in which it was used by the "art" composers from Haydn and Mozart to Bartok, Kodaly and Copland?

This development is not something to regret. If it were we should have to regret not only the advance of science and technology but the whole long campaign of the working class movement to win wider education and artistic experience for all the people.

It seems to me that Fischer's approach leads to valuing rightly the importance of art in society, and understanding the kind of contribution the artist makes. Craig's, on the other hand, leads to a narrowing of sympathy and appreciation, to a failure to respond fully to many kinds of art, and in the end to arbitrary attempts to prescribe the forms and methods of art. We have many examples of how damaging this attitude can become to new work in the arts, and how it can alienate creative minds from Marxism. So it matters to get the question clear.

Julian Tudor Hart

I WOULD like to comment shortly on Honor Arundel's contribution on *Art and Superstructure*. It seemed to me full of wisdom after the event—not only regarding the prudery and dogmatism of the Stalin era, but also in dealing with established great writers such as Scott.

At present I don't think we have any great writers assisting the Labour movement; at least, not Dickenses or Gorkys. We have to measure the real people we have, and cannot wait for history to classify them into greats and also rans. Surely in this measurement we must take into account the actual needs of the mass of the people at the present time. Artists and writers are skilled craftsmen who can serve either these needs, or those of the ruling class. Is such a craftsman likely to diminish himself by setting himself the target of serving the common people? Definitely not, providing that he gives them genuine craftsmanship and has a really deep appreciation and knowledge of people and life.

I speak from the heart about this, having found from experience that most of our literature is not really accessible to the people we are trying to reach. We have very little good socialist literature to help that huge number of people who cannot cope (or do not think they can cope) with political textbooks. Novels (not always great ones) have in the past been a tremendous force for socialist education, and they will be again. We may not have them yet, but we have had some good tries (for us in South Wales for instance, Margot Heineman's *The Adventurers*). How on earth can such books be discussed without using David Craig's categories, without discussing them *politically*?

By all means let us recognise how much we don't know, how dangerous it is to dogmatise, and how easy it is to crush talent by ignorant criticism: but Liberalism is not a step forward even from the vulgarised Marxism we are at the present time putting behind us.

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All who think that an independent socialist education centre is a desirable goal should read this book. It tells of what was achieved by those who are now our grandfathers. We have something to learn from their setbacks, but much more from the confidence in the creative teachings of Marxism which inspired their work, and which inspires this book. (A note on Craik's book also appears in the editorial pages of this issue.)

THE INTERNATIONALE

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